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CREATIVE PERSONALITIES  
VOLUME V

*Rising Above Color*

EDITED BY

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*Current Week-day Religious Education*

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*Religious Education in Illinois*

*Association Press*

New York: 347 Madison Avenue

1946

# CREATIVE PERSONALITIES SERIES

PHILIP HENRY LOTZ, PH.D., *Editor*

Volume I

*Vocations and Professions*

Volume II

*Women Leaders*

Volume III

*Founders of Christian Movements*

Volume IV

*Answering Distant Calls*

MABEL H. ERDMAN, *Editor*

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OF YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS



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## *Introduction*

**H**AS ANY MINORITY GROUP ever started out with greater handicaps and made more significant progress in a shorter time than the American Negro? Every American young person should have the opportunity to know the thrilling story of the achievements of the Negro race. Such information, made available to our schools and libraries, would be most effective in discrediting the outgrown theory of the inferiority of races other than our own white race.

Only a small number of our own list of distinguished Negro personalities could be included in this volume. They are truly among America's great. After listening spellbound to Marian Anderson's Salzburg recital, the great Toscanini said: "What I have heard today is not heard once in a hundred years." When Dr. Carver appeared before a Washington committee several years ago, Dr. David Fairchild, a United States agricultural expert said: "Dr. Carver is one of the most remarkable and extraordinary minds I have ever met." Dr. James W. Johnson was a poet, teacher, lawyer, musician, and statesman. Each one of the persons described in this volume achieved similar, if not equal, greatness.

When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, less than seventy years ago, only 5 per cent of the Negroes were literate. Today 85 per cent of them can read and write. Already a hundred and sixteen Negroes have been elected to Phi Beta Kappa in white American colleges. The Negro spiritual is regarded as the most distinctive contribution to American music.

In spite of this thrilling record of achievement in every vocation and profession, we are still hesitant to give America's tenth man a square deal. Recently, there have been mass murders and anti-Negro rioting in the city of Detroit; Cellos Harrison was lynched in Marianna, Florida; and ten thousand whites engaged in a riot against the Negro population of Beaumont, Texas.

The Negro is seriously handicapped in regard to education, religion, recreation, employment, promotion, travel, housing, hospitalization, security, and recognition. How can we consistently say that we are fighting for democracy and justice for all races and people abroad, and not grant that same privilege to the most important minority group in our own country?

The purpose of this little volume is to cultivate a better understanding between the white and Negro races, and to promote a finer appreciation of the Negro and his contribution to American life and civilization. There is a very great need for such material in our schools and libraries. We send forth this book in the hope that it will bear a message of racial brotherhood.

The editor wishes to express his sincere appreciation to all who have helped in the making of this volume.

PHILIP HENRY LOTZ

Toulon, Illinois  
September, 1943



# *George Washington Carver*

*by*

FRANK GLENN LANKARD

**G**EORGE WASHINGTON CARVER was a dreamer, an artist, a teacher, a "plant wizard," an inventor, and a scientist, who for forty-five years toiled and dreamed in a crude, home-made laboratory. But out of that laboratory have come ideas that have made the desert places blossom as the rose. Under his magic wand, the clay hills of his state have yielded color and beauty, and lowly plants such as the peanut and the sweet potato have yielded by-products and wealth undreamed of before.

George was born near Diamond Grove, Missouri, about 1864, on the farm of Moses Carver. At the close of the Civil War, many of the slaves who had been freed remained on the farms of their former owners in the old slave quarters, where the little black children played and their parents returned at night to rest and sleep.

There were regions in the West and South where little attention was paid to the Emancipation Proclamation, and marauding bands found it profitable to swoop down on the unprotected farms, snatch away the mothers and children, and sell them for whatever prices they could get. The night riders visited the farm of Moses Carver and carried away a mother and her babe. The raiders fled to Arkansas and had no difficulty in disposing of the mother, who was young and strong. But who wanted the tiny, puny baby who, to make matters worse, had developed whooping cough on the journey?

Moses Carver was a magnanimous soul, and he felt sorry for the little, broken-hearted older brother, James, who had escaped the raiders and sobbed for his mother and baby brother. He dispatched one of his men to follow the raiders with a valuable race horse and some money to buy back the mother and the baby. When Carver's

man made contact with the raiders, he found that the mother had already disappeared with her new owner and that only the sick baby remained. But the raiders were not giving away babies, even though they might be ill. The man knew that Mr. Carver would want him to save the child, so he exchanged the blooded race horse, valued at three hundred dollars, for the tiny, sick, black bit of humanity. Returning to the "big farm," the ransomed little fellow and his older brother James were brought up by Moses Carver and his wife as if they were their own children.

From early childhood, the lad manifested an interest in growing things. He wanted to know the secret of every stone and plant, and to learn about every bird, beast, and insect. His little hands were constantly filled with flowers or weeds, and it seemed that no one could satisfy his curiosity. He was also fond of animals and usually carried a toad or two in his pockets. Indeed, he made such playmates of toads that he took them to bed with him, much to the horror of Mrs. Carver, who made a rule that George must turn his pockets inside out before he could enter the house at night. The little lad literally lived in the woods, where he had a secret garden to which he took "sick plants," and soon they were blooming again.

Books were scarce when Carver was a boy, and education among the Negroes was purchased at a great price in industry and struggle. His only possession in the way of books was an old blue-backed speller that he committed to memory. When George was about ten years old, he was given permission by the Carvers to attend a school for Negroes in a town about eight miles from his home. He remained there until he had learned all that the school had to teach him, lodging in the cabins of friendly Negroes and sometimes sleeping out under the open sky or in a stable.

The lad was seized by the spirit to push on to new surroundings that offered better educational advantages. Two years later, he had an opportunity to accompany a family to Fort Scott, Kansas. Kansas was known to Negroes as the "home of the free." The journey was made by wagon drawn by mules, and the boy was delighted by every strange bird, new plant, or stone along the road. George received six or seven years of schooling at Fort Scott, supporting himself by housework and cooking in the homes of various people. It was indeed

fortunate that he had been taught by his foster mother to cook and sew.

At nineteen, George returned to the farm of Moses Carver to spend a summer with the family that had meant so much to him. The summer ended, and the young man once more returned to Kansas to complete his high-school work in Minneapolis, Kansas. He supported himself by running a laundry service. News came that his older brother, James, had died of smallpox. This left George with a keen sense of loneliness, but he determined to trust in God and push ahead.

After graduating from high school, he applied for entrance to a college in Iowa. He spent all but his last cent in making the journey, only to be refused by the president because he was a Negro. Nevertheless, he decided to stay on in the town temporarily and supported himself by opening a laundry, which was well patronized by the students when they learned of his plight. In less than a year, he had gone to Winterset, Iowa, where he secured work as a cook in a large hotel.

One Sunday evening, young Carver attended a church service for white people, slipping into an inconspicuous pew in the rear of the church. He loved to sing, and his voice attracted the attention of the soprano soloist, Mrs. Milholland, who invited him to her home. She led the Negro youth to the piano and was so delighted by the quality of his voice that she arranged to have him come to her home once a week for vocal lessons. She and her husband became his lifelong friends.

Finding that George not only had talent in music but in art as well, the Milhollands encouraged him to study art and music seriously, and to save his money with the thought of going to college. Within a year, he had saved enough money to register at Simpson College, where he studied art and music in addition to his regular college work. After paying his entrance fees, he had only ten cents left. Five of this he spent for cornmeal and the other for beef suet, and on these two articles he lived for an entire week while he was working up his laundry route.

It did not take the young man long to complete his formal lessons in art. At the conclusion of the third lesson, the teacher told him that

he was a "natural artist" and that the remaining lessons in the course could not teach him anything. Painting was his favorite recreation, and his first real painting, which was exhibited at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, was valued at four thousand dollars.

In Simpson College, Carver's life purpose took form. His insatiable desire for knowledge was intensified. He wanted to know how plants grew, where the blossoms got their color, why God made each thing, and how he and the plants and all living things were related to God, who made all things. This desire led him into agricultural chemistry at Iowa State College.

Here again Carver supported himself by operating a laundry service. His brilliance in science was quickly recognized, and upon receiving his Baccalaureate degree he was made supervisor of the college greenhouses and director of the systematic botany department. Meanwhile he continued his studies for a Master's degree in science. During all of this time he did not give up his interest in art and music, although he regarded science as more useful and practical.

While at Iowa State College, Carver formed a friendship with Henry A. Wallace, then just a boy. He took him along on numerous field trips and cultivated his interest in agriculture. Carver characterized Henry as an inquisitive little youngster who wanted to know everything about every plant.

A significant thing happened to Carver while he was at Iowa State College: Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee had long dreamed of what might be done for his people in the South by opening their eyes and training their hands to make use of the gifts that God had placed all about them in the form of the simple things of life. He needed a helper who would not encourage the young Negroes to leave their homes of poverty and squalor and seek better conditions in a new environment, but who would be able to teach them to beautify and enrich their surroundings by knowing how to use the things that were at hand. He needed a man with Carver's training and spirit. Accordingly, Washington wrote to Iowa State College and inquired if they had such a person, and the college replied that they had exactly the man for the place. George Carver answered the

call, and in 1894 he journeyed to Tuskegee to take up his lifelong work, a post that he held until his death in 1943.

When Carver arrived at Tuskegee, he found that there was no equipment and, worse still, no money to provide it. But he was not a man to be discouraged easily. In city alleys and old rubbish heaps he and his students found glass bottles, wire, tubes, rubber, and other materials, from which they constructed crude apparatus for a laboratory. It was the beginning of Doctor Carver's lifelong philosophy: "Let down your buckets where you are!"

Doctor Carver turned his attention to the farm conditions in the South and found that the average farmer was producing crops that sold below the actual cost of production, possessed implements that were more or less primitive, and had all too many furrowed and barren hillsides. He appealed to the southern farmers to stop thinking that their ills were due to legislation and to begin to feel an individual responsibility for a better understanding of the laws of nature that governed the agricultural life of the region. He quickly saw that the farmers needed to make better use of the simple and common foods that grew in the South, such as peanuts, pecans, and sweet potatoes. As a matter of fact, he achieved his greatest success with the lowly, everyday materials that were all about him and that could be easily and cheaply produced.

Carver became seriously interested in the peanut when the boll weevil was devastating the cotton industry in the Deep South. The peanut alone has yielded nearly three hundred by-products. From it Carver developed cheese, linoleum, flour, meal, breakfast foods, face powder, face creams, axle grease, dyes, woodstains, stock foods, soap, five kinds of punches, and even nitroglycerine. He startled people by saying that he had discovered in the peanut over thirty-two different kinds of milk richer than cow's milk, which it closely resembles. This peanut milk is used in making a delicious, high-grade ice cream. Not long ago, a traveler in Africa found a mission hospital feeding babies peanut milk made from a formula furnished by Doctor Carver at Tuskegee, Alabama. He has recipes for a complete meal, from soup to nuts, of synthetic dishes made from the peanut alone. So great has been his success with the peanut that southern

farmers long ago ceased to think of it as a product for circuses and ball parks. It has become one of the nation's major crops, thanks largely to Carver's genius.

Carver also carried on experiments with the common sweet potato, producing from it about a hundred and twenty-five by-products, including: flour, breakfast foods, coffee, candy, dyes, library paste, wood fillers, ink, and shoeblackening. His sweet-potato flour was used during World War I by the students of Tuskegee Institute as a substitute for wheat flour, and it attracted considerable attention. The United States Government asserted that the sweet potato offered the greatest possibilities in the way of saving wheat flour that had yet been made known in America.

Turning his attention to the barren hills that are so frequently found in the South, Carver brought forth from them discoveries of many useful products. Blues in many varieties, including a water-soluble laundry blue, were made from red clay. He believed that he had found in Alabama clay the equivalent of the famous "Egyptian blue," which has been a lost art for centuries. It was his opinion that this discovery unlocked the secret of the lasting colors of the pottery of Egypt. It was Carver's interest in art that actuated him to experiment with the native clays about Tuskegee, and from these he developed paints that, for luminous quality and soft colors, cannot be equaled by oils. Altogether, nearly three hundred varieties of colored paints have been discovered from clays.

Carver also experimented with a new road-building process. He believed it was practicable to use cotton to bind asphalt together in much the same way that steel rods act for cement. He estimated that forty bales of cotton would furnish enough binding material for a mile of road one inch thick. If the new process should become commonly accepted, it would mean just one more outlet for the dominant crop of the South.

By-products made from the peanut, sweet potato, and cotton for road building do not exhaust the list of Carver's discoveries. He developed potash from chinaberry ashes, tonic stock foods from snap corn, and ultramarine dyes from Macon County clays, that are used for cotton, wool, silk, and leather. He also experimented with the pecan nut with great success, and he made a synthetic

marble from wood shavings. As a result of his experiments, cotton stalk fiber has been used for rope, cordage, mats, and carpets; furniture stains have been made from native clays and vegetables; dyes have been made from dandelions, wood ashes, and tomato vines; dressings for canvas shoes have been made of Macon County clays; white and colored washes have been made from native clays; feathers for millinery purposes have been gathered from native, wild, and barnyard fowls; poplar bark has been used for artificial rubber; okra fiber has been used for rope, paper, cordage, strawboard, matting, and carpets; and wistaria has been utilized for basketry work. At the meeting of the Chemurgic Conference in Mississippi in 1937, at which he was the principal speaker, Dr. Carver said: "The time is near when we will have to add a new kingdom to the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms—I mean the synthetic kingdom."

It appears also that Carver had a genius for embroidery, and his collection of crochet work includes more than a hundred original patterns.

Dr. Carver made it a habit to look for diamonds in his own backyard. A sentence in his writings is a classic: "Let us become familiar with the commonest things about us, of which two thirds of the people are surprisingly ignorant." Constantly he appealed to his people to cease making excuses and "chasing after false gods," and to develop an individual responsibility for the more abundant life. It was his conviction that wherever God has placed man, he has also placed everything that man needs for life, if only he will look for it and turn it to his needs. To him, the verse in the Scriptures came with unusual power: "To you it shall be for meat."<sup>1</sup>

Lesser men might have become vain in the midst of so many honors, but Carver remained the same devout, humble Christian, claiming that all of his scientific achievements had come about as a result of his close relation to God. He regarded each discovery as a gift from God to the people of the South. He was always saying that his help had come "from the Lord which made heaven and earth." He looked upon himself as a mere instrument in the hands of God, and he believed that he was divinely led in his accomplishments. He

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:29.

even claimed that often the moment God revealed an idea to him, the method for its materialization presented itself. As an example, he pointed out that within an hour after the idea was conceived he produced the equivalent of the yolk of an egg from a Porto Rican sweet potato.<sup>2</sup> This childlike faith, which many people would call naïve, was likewise very distressing to his more scientific brethren, both white and black; for in speaking of his discoveries, Carver used the language of faith more than the language of science or psychology. But after all, the terminology is less important than the fact.

Carver dearly loved his own work, and he believed it was possible for the people about him to get real enjoyment out of theirs. He once said:

If every farmer could recognize that his plants were real, living things, and that sunshine, air, food, and drink were just as necessary for their lives as for that of the animal, the problem would become at once intelligent, enjoyable and practical.<sup>3</sup>

He was quite content with his meager salary. Once when the peanut growers sent him a check for eradicating a disease that threatened the crop, he returned it with a reminder that God did not charge them to grow peanuts, and neither would he accept any pay for curing them. It is said that he never made a penny for himself out of his discoveries and never once applied for a patent.

Although Dr. Carver lived a simple and sacrificial life, fame did not pass him by unnoticed. It was only natural that a man who lived so rich and full a life and who had so much to contribute would be in demand as a lecturer in colleges for Negroes and whites alike. He was elected to membership in the Royal Society of Arts in London, although he never knew who suggested his name. In 1923, for distinguished research in agricultural chemistry, he received the Spingarn Medal, which is presented to the man or woman of African descent and American citizenship who is deemed to have made the highest achievement in an honorable field of human endeavor.

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<sup>2</sup> *Literary Digest* (December 13, 1924).

<sup>3</sup> *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* (March, 1902), No. 3, Vol. XXV, p. 321.



Simpson College conferred on its "most distinguished son" an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1928.

Mr. Edison invited Carver to become associated with him in his laboratory in New Jersey, with a salary of \$175,000 a year and all the funds that he might require for his experiments.<sup>4</sup> But, although not unmindful of the opportunity, Carver preferred to stay at Tuskegee among his own people and help them in their struggle for economic independence. In declining Mr. Edison's offer, he said: "I felt that God was not through with me yet at Tuskegee; there is still plenty of work to do for Him here." He also declined an offer of the Russian Government on the same grounds.<sup>5</sup>

In 1937, Tuskegee Institute unveiled a bronze bust of George Washington Carver in honor of his forty years of work there. It is said that

. . . he listened meekly to the speeches, accepted the tribute with evident embarrassment and scurried back to his test tubes and peanuts. There, he once more secluded himself in an almost monastic self-effacement, indifferent to the pleas of outsiders to accept the high honors and emoluments due him.<sup>6</sup>

Truly, this "man with a magic wand" possessed the spirit of the Master, who said: "But I am among you as he that serveth."

### Questions for Discussion

1. Do you believe the oft-repeated phrase: "Every man has his price?"
2. What is it that makes one child manifest what appears to be almost an instinctive desire for an education, while another is quite indifferent?
3. Are we missing chances to utilize undreamed-of resources in the many common things that abound all about us?
4. Do you think that some people are "just naturally cut out," as the expression goes, for certain callings—such as medicine, agriculture, or the ministry?
5. How may we use our resources to the fullest extent?

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<sup>4</sup> *The Southern Workman* (September, 1934), p. 261.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>6</sup> *Literary Digest* (June 12, 1937), pp. 20-21.

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## *Marian Anderson*

*by*

HAROLD B. HUNTING

THE ANDERSONS lived on Martin Street, in South Philadelphia. The streets were not very clean, and the houses were poor. It was the Negro section of the city, and the landlords and the city officials were inclined to think that anything was good enough for "niggers." The floors and windows in the Anderson home, however, were spotlessly clean. Mr. Anderson supported his wife and three little girls by peddling ice in summer, and coal and wood in winter. You might have seen his horse and wagon almost anywhere in South Philadelphia.

One day he stopped his horse in front of a pawnshop, piled high with guns, watches, musical instruments, and the like. His eye had been caught by a violin bearing the price mark, three dollars. His little daughter Marian was "crazy about music," and had been begging him to buy her a violin. He had been saving his dimes and quarters for this purpose, but dimes and quarters do not grow very rapidly into dollars. Perhaps this violin was a bargain. Marian was still only a little girl, with arms that were not very long for tucking a violin under her chin; but since she wanted to try her small fingers on its strings, the father was determined that she should have her chance. The next day the ice wagon stopped there again, and father and daughter stepped into the shop. "Are you sure it is a good one?" asked the girl. Of course the man in the shop was sure it was good, so Marian went home with her prize.

Not long after that, a secondhand piano also found its way into the Anderson parlor. Father and mother must have worked hard and must have sacrificed much to make that piano possible. But what glorious fun the child had picking out tunes on the black

and white keys! Every spare moment of her time was spent at the piano.

Marian could sing as well as play. The Andersons belonged to the Union Baptist Church, which was located not far from their home. Most of their Negro friends also belonged to that church. Before Marian was eight years old, somebody in the church discovered that she had a lovely voice, and asked her to be a member of the junior choir. It was not long before she was being called on for solos. At church suppers, when they wanted to attract a crowd and earn money for the new church carpet, the church people would advertise that "Marian Anderson, Baby Contralto" would sing. When the senior choir, too, needed a contralto voice, the girl was taken in, even though she was still only a child and the rest of the choir adults. Marian could sing almost any part, for even then her voice was remarkable for its range. If the soprano happened to be sick, the choir leader would say: "Marian, you take that part." She could even sing the men's parts. More and more, people said to her parents: "Your daughter has a remarkable voice. She ought to take lessons." So, just as they had worked and sacrificed to buy Marian a violin and a piano, the Andersons now began to work and sacrifice in order to save enough for vocal lessons.

Alas, before they could carry out their plans, Mr. Anderson died, leaving to the mother the task of supporting herself and her three daughters. Mrs. Anderson found a job as cleaning woman in one of Philadelphia's department stores, but there could be no thought now of music lessons; every penny had to go for food or clothing or fuel. Marian kept on singing, however, in the Union Baptist Church choir and elsewhere. Every now and then, some other church would need a soloist for some special occasion, and young Miss Anderson would be sent for. Sometimes they paid her fifty cents, sometimes as much as two or three dollars.

Meantime Marian was growing up. Grammar-school days came to an end, and she entered the freshman class in the South Philadelphia High School for girls. Here, too, her fellow students and teachers soon were talking about "that new girl with the wonderful voice." Here, too, her friends said: "You ought to have that voice trained. You should take lessons." But lessons cost money, and how

could a Negro girl from South Philadelphia whose mother was a cleaning woman in a department store afford them?

Mrs. Anderson, however, had never once lost sight of her ambition for the little girl who was "crazy about music," and by dint of the hardest possible efforts she had actually managed to put aside a few dollars. One day she handed this money to Marian, saying: "I want you to go to this music school (naming a famous Philadelphia conservatory of music) and see if this will pay for a few lessons for you." So, on her next free day, Marian went to the music school. She was shown to a bench in an anteroom and told to wait, that the director was busy. She waited and waited. After a long time, the person who had first met her returned. Seeing Marian, she exclaimed: "Oh, you here yet? Well, we don't take colored."

Nevertheless, Marian found real friends at high school, among them her teacher, Dr. Lucie Wilson. "That girl must be given her chance," said this good woman. A day came when David Bispham was to sing in Philadelphia. Dr. Wilson was a friend of the great baritone and persuaded him to give an audition to the young Negro girl. She sang for him, and he was pleased. "Of course she must have lessons," he said. "I know just the teacher for her, Guiseppi Boghetti, right here in your own city. But it will cost money. She will have to pay him a hundred and twenty-five dollars before he will give one lesson."

One hundred and twenty-five dollars—David Bispham might as well have advised Marian to take a trip to the moon! At least, so it seemed. But this time the girl's church friends came to her aid, to their everlasting credit. The next time you pass a little Negro Baptist or Methodist Church, its walls perhaps needing a coat of paint, remember that it was just such a church that gave Marian Anderson her first chance to take vocal lessons. "We'll help you raise that money," the church folks said. "We'll help you give a concert. You have a host of friends who have heard you sing in our church and in other churches in this part of the city. They'll come to hear you again." So they set the date, and everyone helped to print and distribute the posters and tickets. On the night of the concert, the church was crowded. So the money was raised, and Marian began her studies with the great Italian master of voice training.

There followed long years of hard work. Marian was then only fourteen or fifteen years old, but she had a magnificent physique and could endure the physical and nervous strain. Somehow more money was raised whenever it was needed, and the girl kept on studying with her teacher and friend, who soon realized that his pupil had extraordinary talent. Little by little, Marian's voice developed, showing more and more promise.

In 1929, when Miss Anderson was seventeen, a competition was held to choose a soloist for the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Believing that his favorite pupil could win this honor, Boghetti, without letting her know what was on his mind, arranged to have her sing at one of the competitive trials—and she won! So she went to New York and sang. The last notes of the program had scarcely died away when a manager for a concert agency approached Miss Anderson with a contract, which she accepted and signed. The little choir singer from South Philadelphia was now to make a tour of American cities.

The next few years, however, were disappointing. While her audiences were always enthusiastic, the people of America, in general, could not believe that this young Negro girl could really be a great musical artist. She kept on studying with her teacher, however, and every year her mastery of her voice and of her art, grew more perfect.

Early in 1932, Boghetti said to his pupil: "I'll tell you what we'll do; we'll go to Europe. There you can perfect your knowledge of German and Italian and the other languages in which great songs have been written, and you will have a chance to meet and hear all the world's greatest musicians." So to Europe they went—to Germany first. That summer Miss Anderson sang at the annual Mozart Festival in Salzburg. After the performance, the famous orchestral conductor Arturo Toscanini, who had been in the audience, said to Miss Anderson: "A voice like yours is only heard about once a century."

After Salzburg, requests for the singer's services poured in. Her journeys through the various countries of Europe were triumphal processions. She sang in almost every European capital. The Finnish composer Sibelius wrote a song especially for her. Returning from

Europe, she went to South America and sang in Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

Gradually reports began to drift back to the United States of the new contralto about whom all Europe was raving—and she was an American! More incredible still, she was a Negro girl from South Philadelphia. At length, in 1935, a letter came from New York City inviting Miss Anderson to sing at Town Hall and from there to make another tour of American cities. So she came home.

At first, fate seemed to be against her. On the very last day aboard the steamer, the day before her engagement at Town Hall, she fell and broke her ankle. Her friends advised her to cancel the engagement, but she insisted on going through with it. When the time came, she hobbled onto the stage while the curtain was still down and took her place behind the curve of the grand piano, wearing a long dress that hid the heavy plaster cast. Not until her audience was roaring its approval in frenzied applause, begging for one more encore after another, did she tell them about the accident. She had stood through the whole program on one leg!

This marked the beginning of a triumphal success in America such as Miss Anderson had won for herself in Europe. Not only in New York, but wherever she sang people went wild with delight. She sang German songs, Italian songs, Finnish songs; she sang her own Negro songs with a pathos and sweetness unsurpassed.

For each appearance on a concert platform, Miss Anderson receives hundreds of dollars, sometimes as much as eighteen hundred dollars for a single evening's performance. Yet she has remained at all times as quiet and unaffected a girl as when she was contralto in the Union Baptist choir. She always shares the credit for her successes with her teacher and her loyal accompanist, Kosti Vehanan, a native of Finland. When, for example, someone asks, "Where are you going to sing next week?" she is likely to reply: "We have engagements on such or such days, in this or that city." So, too, although she has lived in the finest hotels in the world, in Philadelphia she prefers to stay with her mother in their old apartment and help with the housework.

In the spring of 1939, the newspapers were full of the story of the difficulty Miss Anderson's manager was having in his efforts to

secure an auditorium for her concert in Washington, D. C. He tried first to hire Constitution Hall, which belongs to the Daughters of the American Revolution, but was told it was engaged for that particular night. He asked for a different night, but it was engaged then too. In fact, it was closed forever to all Negroes. The Daughters were like that Musical Conservatory in Philadelphia: "We don't take colored." The manager then tried to rent a large high-school auditorium in the city, but the Board of Education, following the lead of the D.A.R., likewise refused to let it be used by a Negro singer. As a result of this incident, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt announced her intention of giving up her membership in the D.A.R. Hundreds of letters of protest poured into the office of the Board of Education, and many of the most distinguished men and women in the country expressed their indignation.

Marian Anderson finally gave her concert in Washington, D. C., not in any indoor auditorium, but out of doors, on Easter Sunday. Seventy-five thousand persons gathered to hear her, in front of the Lincoln Memorial. It was the largest crowd that had been assembled in that city since Lindbergh's reception in 1927. Miss Anderson's figure was outlined, in the afternoon sunlight, against Daniel Chester French's great statue of Abraham Lincoln, friend of the Negro people. Surely the spirit of the Great Emancipator must have rejoiced!

It is pleasant to be able to record that, on January 7, 1943, Miss Anderson was invited by the D.A.R. to give a war-relief concert in Constitution Hall. Both Negro and white people attended, without segregation. It may be that, between 1939 and 1943, the committee of the D.A.R. had heard Marian Anderson sing and that her voice won their hearts as it did the hearts of the people of Houston, Texas, another southern city where ordinarily the color line is sharply drawn. The morning after her concert there, the *Houston Post* remarked: "If there was a dry eye in the house, it was because they sold a seat to a stone man."

Marian Anderson is among those who are doing their utmost to break down the hard, bitter walls of prejudice that separate man from his brother. Those walls cannot be battered down by force; nor can they be argued down. But Marian Anderson is helping to sing them down.



## Questions for Discussion

1. What light does the story of Marian Anderson throw on the abilities of the Negro race? With which of the following opinions do you most nearly agree?
  - a. One genius like Miss Anderson does not settle anything. Granted all that may be claimed for her remarkable talent, it remains true that, on the average, Negroes are inferior to whites. The race produces fewer men and women of genius.
  - b. No one can prove that there are fewer Negro than white geniuses. There might even be more Negro geniuses, but they are denied the chance to develop because poverty and other disadvantages bar the doors of opportunity to them.
  - c. Marian Anderson is proof that the Negro race does produce some geniuses. Geniuses are God's gift to the world, and there are all too few of them. For their sake, it is vital that all Negro youths should be given an equal chance with white youths. \*
2. Think further about the value and importance of Negro churches, in the light of Miss Anderson's experience. How valuable are they to American society? Does his church mean more or less to the Negro than it does to white men?
3. Some persons might say: "We do not deny that Negroes have a natural gift for music, but that does not prove that they have superior intelligence or great capacity for hard intellectual labor." What light, if any, does the story of Marian Anderson throw on the problem thus raised?

## Project

Determine to what extent this problem has been explored by unprejudiced scientists: What evidence has been established regarding the relative level of intelligence of the Negro race by comparing the I.Q.'s of Negro children with those of the white and other races?

## For Further Reading

Benedict, Ruth, *Race Science and Politics* (New York, Viking Press, revised edition, 1943), \$2.50.

## *W. E. B. DuBois*

*by*

HAROLD B. HUNTING

**I**F YOU HAD VISITED the little town of Great Barrington, in western Massachusetts, back in the eighteen seventies, you might have seen a colored boy playing with the white boys of his neighborhood. "How strange!" you would have thought, for there was hardly another Negro lad in the whole state, except in the large cities. This boy's ancestor, Tom Burghardt, had been brought to Massachusetts with the early settlers as a slave. He earned his freedom by fighting in the Revolutionary War, and the family had lived in and around Great Barrington ever since.

Burghardt DuBois, who was born in 1868, was accepted by the other boys of the town as one of themselves. His skin, of course, was darker than theirs; but then, so were there boys whose hair was redder than theirs. Going to the same school, playing the same games, and as he grew older attending the same socials and parties, the boy never was made to feel that he was different until one day an older girl rudely refused to be his partner. Then and there, he began to understand that, as a Negro, he belonged to a world that was regarded by white people as "different," and not only different but inferior.

All through his life that boy's heart was to burn with indignation at the injustice of race prejudice; all his life he was to be a fighter against it. He always tried to fight fair. He always tried to keep bitterness and hatred out of his fighting. But he fought! He could not bring himself to endure injustice "lying down."

When he was twenty years old, DuBois went with a group of Negro singers to a Minnesota hotel to earn money by working in the dining room and giving concerts. DuBois did not object to any kind

of work, but he hated the contemptuous way white people treated the Negro waiters. The manager of the hotel did not even give them decent food, so that the only way to keep from starving was to steal:

You cut off extra portions, dashed off into corners and ate and ate. I was too cowardly to steal much myself, but not coward enough to refuse what others stole.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in order to earn tips, the waiters had to cringe before the guests. He recalled an incident that occurred one day:

I noticed one fat hog, feeding at a heavily gilded trough, who could not find his waiter. He beckoned me. It was not his voice, for his mouth was too full. It was his way, his air, his assumption. Thus Caesar ordered his legionaries or Cleopatra her slaves. Dogs recognized the gesture. I did not. He may be beckoning yet for all I know. I did not look that way again. . . . I would work my hands off for an honest wage, but for "tips" and "hand-me-outs," never!<sup>2</sup>

The young man's first campaign in his fight against injustice was to struggle for an education. "If they think I'm inferior, I'll show them," he seemed to say. And show them he did. DuBois' record in the Great Barrington High School was so brilliant that his teachers encouraged him to go to college. Because he did not have sufficient funds to go to Harvard, as he wanted to, he went instead to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, among his own people. But DuBois still clung to his dream of graduating from Harvard; and, after finishing the course at Fiske with high honors, he succeeded in winning a scholarship at the oldest and greatest of American universities. Two years later, he was chosen as one of the six speakers for his class at the Commencement exercises. After graduation, through the recommendation of his teachers and on the basis of his scholastic record, DuBois was awarded a grant from the Slater Fund for the education of Negroes, and in the fall of 1892, found himself studying in Berlin. When at last he returned to the United States, Dr. DuBois had

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<sup>1</sup> *Dark Water*, by W. E. B. DuBois (New York, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1920), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

achieved as thorough an education and as fine a record of scholarship as any white man in America.

But merely to prove to white men—even brilliant and exceptional minds—that he was mentally their equal was not enough for DuBois. He longed to use his education and talents to help the great masses of his own people, most of whom were riding in dirty “Jim Crow” cars, living in miserable huts or city tenements, and denied any opportunities for better things, merely because their skins were black.

Dr. DuBois’ first plan was to give the people of America, white and black, more correct and scientific information about Negroes. White people are prejudiced and cruel to their black neighbors, he thought, because they don’t know the truth about them. During the next fifteen years, therefore, he worked at this problem: “What are the facts, and how can I give them to the American people?”

For a year he was on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania, as director of a research project entitled the Philadelphia Negro. There was much crime in that city, and many people blamed the Negroes. That year Dr. DuBois and his young wife lived in the very heart of the Negro section of Philadelphia, in the midst of dirt and disease, in order to find out how the colored people lived, how they earned their bread and butter, what their homes were like, and what they did to amuse themselves. When finally the report was published, substantiated by statistical evidence, it was shown that the Negro was no more a criminal “by nature” than the white man, but that the poverty and ignorance and misery that were forced on him by white men sometimes helped to make a criminal out of him.

The next year Dr. DuBois was called to Atlanta University to make a similar study of the Negroes in the South. Thereafter, year after year, with the help of his students and a little (very little) money contributed by friends, he submitted reports on how southern Negroes lived, and the conditions they had to contend with.

Dr. DuBois’ reports were read and quoted all over America, indeed all over the world. But somehow, they failed of their purpose. Even the men and women who read them did nothing about them, and only special students read them. One study, on which he had worked a whole year, was made at the request of the United States Govern-

ment. About a year after the manuscript had been sent in, he inquired how soon it was to be printed. The answer was: "Not until we have more money." Still later, he went to Washington and asked to see the manuscript, but was told that it had been burned!

So it appeared that information was not enough, facts were not enough. Somebody must make those facts live, must make them catch fire in living human hearts and flame out into action that would change injustice into justice, filth and disease into health and cleanliness and happiness. The need for something more alive than "dry" figures and charts was brought home to Dr. DuBois when Sam Hose, a poor Negro in central Georgia, killed his landlord. There had been a dispute over money, a quarrel, and a fight. If the killing had been the result of a fight between two white men, the slayer would have been tried for manslaughter that is, for killing in a sudden passion, not deliberately. But Sam was a "nigger." When the sheriff finally caught him and put him in prison, a roar went up all over the state: "Kill the nigger!" Dr. DuBois wrote a letter to the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, pleading for calmness and fair play. He started downtown with it, but never reached the editor's office. On the way the news met him: Sam Hose had been lynched, and his knuckles were on exhibition at a grocery store on Mitchell Street.

After this, Dr. DuBois used his pen more and more for another type of publicity. He sent articles to national magazines, burning with indignation—articles that gripped the attention and the imagination of his readers. He wrote stories of Negro life. There was, for example, his story of the two Johns, which was published first in a magazine and later as a chapter in *Souls of Black Folk*. One John was white, the other black. As children, they were playmates, hunting and fishing and roaming all over the countryside together. But the years passed, and the white John went away to college. Somehow the black John managed to scrape a little money together, and he too went North to a school for colored boys and girls. After years of struggle, he went back to his own little village in the South with an education and an eager desire to help his own people. Through the town judge, father of the white John, he was appointed teacher of the little one-room school for Negro children. But he made the

mistake of going to the judge's front door. He had forgotten that, in the South, no Negro ever knocks at the front door; he must always go around by the back door, to the kitchen, where the "servants" are. "We'll give you a trial in this school, John," said the judge, "but only on one condition. We expect you to teach nigger children to keep their place." John promised and began his work. But that same week the white John also came home for the Christmas holidays. One night, he drank too much whiskey and on his way home tried to kiss the black John's sister, whom he met walking along a lonely country road. Black John interfered, and there was a fight. The next morning, the mob found Black John hiding in a swamp and hanged him and filled his body with bullets.

Much of this writing was extraordinarily beautiful, indeed so beautiful that Dr. DuBois' fame became nation-wide. Consider for example, these passages from his own story of his childhood:

I was born by a golden river and in the shadow of two great hills, five years after the Emancipation Proclamation. The house was quaint, with clapboards running up and down, neatly trimmed, and there were five rooms, a tiny porch, a rosy front yard, and unbelievably delicious strawberries in the rear. . . . Mother was dark shining bronze, with a tiny ripple in her black hair, black-eyed, with a heavy, kind face. She gave one the impression of infinite patience, but a curious determination was concealed in her softness. . . . Alfred, my father, must have seemed a splendid vision in that little valley under the shelter of those mighty hills. He was small and beautiful of face and feature, just tinted with the sun, his curly hair chiefly revealing his kinship to Africa. In nature he was a dreamer—romantic, indolent, kind, unreliable. He had in him the making of a poet, an adventurer or a Beloved Vagabond according to the life that closed around him; and that life gave him all too little. . . . My childhood days were very happy. Early we moved back to Grandfather Burghardt's home—I barely remember its stone fireplace, big kitchen, and delightful woodshed. Then this house passed to other branches of the clan, and we moved to rented quarters in town—to one delectable place "upstairs," with a wide yard full of shrubbery, and a brook; to another house abutting a railroad, with infinite interests and astonishing playmates; and finally back to the quiet street on which I was born—down a long lane, and in a homely cozy cottage with a living room, a tiny sitting room, a pantry and two attic bed-rooms. Here

mother and I lived until she died, in 1884, for father early began his restless wanderings. I last remember urgent letters for us to come to New Milford, where he had started a barber shop. But mother no longer trusted his dreams and he soon faded out of our lives into silence.<sup>8</sup>

This, as anyone must feel, is picture writing. Every sentence, every word, flashes a picture before the reader's eye, clear and colorful, and never to be forgotten.

Much of Dr. DuBois' best writing on behalf of his own people was in connection with an organization that he himself helped to start, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. This began as a conference of Negro leaders at Niagara Falls, in 1905. Dr. DuBois writes:

I went to Buffalo and hired a little hotel on the Canadian side of the river, and waited for the men to attend the meeting. If sufficient men had not come to pay for the hotel, I certainly should have been in bankruptcy and perhaps in jail.

Twenty-nine men, from fourteen states, came to that first conference and drew up a platform of eight principles. The one that attracted attention most widely was the sixth principle: "The recognition of the highest and best human training as the monopoly of no class or race." This was interpreted by some as an attack on Booker T. Washington and Tuskegee Institute, which it was not intended to be. Dr. DuBois did not hesitate to praise Mr. Washington as a "distinguished American" and to recognize the value of manual training for Negroes, which was the unique feature of such institutions as Tuskegee and Hampton. But many white men, in both the North and South, by their sudden enthusiasm for these institutions, made it clear that they thought this was the only kind of education a Negro was fit for. And Dr. DuBois felt strongly that colored boys and girls who were capable of a college education like his own should be given a chance at the very best.

These conferences of Negro leaders were held annually until 1911, when, together with a number of white friends, the group was incorporated as a permanent organization, the famous N.A.A.C.P. During

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-10.

the more than thirty years since it was established, this organization has been in the front line of the battle against racial injustice. For example, when the United States entered World War I, while Negro young men were drafted into the Army, there were no plans for training Negro officers. The N.A.A.C.P. brought pressure to bear on the War Department, and finally the force of public sentiment became so strong that a training camp for Negro cadets was established at Des Moines, Iowa, where seven hundred officers received their commissions. Then came the systematic effort on the part of certain white officers in France to disparage the Negro soldiers, so that Dr. DuBois and other prominent and influential Negroes were sent abroad by the N.A.A.C.P. to report on the situation. Dr. DuBois wrote of his experiences:

I saw the mud and dirt of the trenches. I heard from the mouths of soldiers the kind of treatment that black men got in the American Army. I was convinced and said that some American white officers fought more valiantly against Negroes within our ranks than they did against the Germans. I collected some astonishing documents of systematic slander and attacks upon Negroes and demands upon the French government for insulting attitudes toward them.

It was largely through the efforts of the N.A.A.C.P. that when World War II broke out, the American people as a whole were ready to believe that Negroes make as brave, patriotic, and intelligent soldiers as any other group of citizens.

World War I was followed by a discouraging wave of lynchings and outbreaks of race hatred, not only in the South but in the great northern cities where Negroes helped to provide the necessary labor for our war industries. Wherever possible, the N.A.A.C.P. defended in the courts Negroes who were falsely accused of crime. Among these court cases was that of the Scottsboro boys in Alabama. They were sentenced to be hanged for an attack on a white girl, but the verdict was set aside by the United States Supreme Court on the ground that the boys had not had a fair trial. As these lines are written, three of these boys have now been set free by the governor of the state; but four others are still being held prisoner, although the legal evidence against them is no different from that on which



the other boys were tried and unjustly condemned. Without a doubt, if it had not been for the N.A.A.C.P., which provided the funds for hiring skilled lawyers and for appealing the case all the way to the Supreme Court, all seven of the Scottsboro boys would have been dead long ago.

At the time of its organization, it was important for the N.A.A.C.P. to make its appeal to the public, which, in a democracy like ours, is the only way to further justice. Moreover, since the stories these Negroes wanted to print were not acceptable to most American magazines and newspapers, it was necessary for them to start a magazine of their own. So they started the *Crisis*, of which Dr. DuBois was editor and chief contributor until 1933. The periodical had an extraordinary success. Starting with only a thousand copies the first month, circulation went up at the rate of a thousand a month until, in 1918, it reached over a hundred thousand copies per month. Many of the ablest writers in America, both white and black have written for the *Crisis*.

Let this story close with a few more quotations from Dr. DuBois' writings—the kind of thing he spread before the readers of the *Crisis*, month after month, for twenty-three years. Here is a conversation between a Negro and a white friend. The Negro is explaining why sometimes he appears to be oversensitive:

I arise at seven. The milkman has neglected me. He pays little attention to colored districts. My white neighbor glares elaborately. I walk softly lest I disturb him. The children jeer as I pass to work. The women on the street car withdraw their skirts or prefer to stand. The policeman is truculent. The elevator man hates to serve Negroes. My job is insecure because the white union wants it and does not want me. I try to lunch but no place near will serve me.

I hurry home through crowds. They mutter or get angry. I go to a mass meeting, they stare. I go to a church. "We don't admit niggers."

Or perhaps I leave the beaten track. I seek new work. "Our employees would not work with you. Our customers would object."

I ask to help in social uplift. "Why—er—we will write you." . . .

I write literature. "We cannot publish stories of colored folks of that type." It's the only type I know.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

Again, here is Dr. DuBois' picture of a Jim Crow waiting room and railway car:

Usually there is no heat in winter and no air in summer; with undisturbed loafers and train hands and broken, disreputable settees. To buy a ticket is torture. You stand and stand and wait and wait until every white person at the "other window" is waited on. Then the tired agent yells across, because all the money and tickets are over there: "What d'ye want? What? Where?"

The "Jim Crow" car is up next the baggage car and engine. Usually there is no step to help you climb on, and often the car is a smoker cut in two, and you must pass through the white smokers or else they pass through your part, with swagger and noise and stares. Your compartment is a half or a quarter or an eighth of the oldest car in the service of the road. Unless it happens to be a through express, the plush is caked with dirt, the floor is grimy, the windows dirty. It is difficult to get lunch or clean water. Lunch rooms either "don't serve niggers" or serve them through some dirty and ill-attended hole in the wall. As for toilet rooms—don't.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, let us quote one or two paragraphs from Dr. DuBois' credo, in which he sums up his whole attitude toward life:

I believe in God, who made of one blood all nations that on earth do dwell. I believe that all men, black and brown and white, are brothers, varying through time and opportunity, in form and gift and feature, but different in no essential particular, and alike in soul and the possibility of infinite development.

Especially do I believe in the Negro race; in the beauty of its genius, the sweetness of its soul, and its strength in that meekness which shall yet inherit this turbulent earth. . . .

I believe in the Devil and his angels, who wantonly work to narrow the opportunity of struggling human beings, especially if they be black; who spit in the faces of the fallen, strike them that cannot strike again, believe the worst and work to prove it, hating the image which their Maker has stamped on a brother's soul. . . .

Finally, I believe in Patience—patience with the weakness of the Weak and with the strength of the Strong, the prejudice of the Ignorant and

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 228-230.

the ignorance of the Blind; patience with the tardy triumph of Joy and the mad chastening of Sorrow—patience with God.<sup>6</sup>

## Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think of the action of the white girl who refused to be young DuBois' partner in a social game? Some would say that she was a prejudiced snob and should have treated him like any other boy, whereas others claim that if white and black young people of both sexes mingle freely in social gatherings, the result is likely to be intermarriage between the races. What is your opinion?

2. What do you think of segregation? Some hold that it is better for Negroes themselves not only to have their own churches, lodges, and amusement places, but to live together in Negro residential sections and to have their own streetcars and hotels; whereas others point out that complete segregation is impossible because of the expense involved in building separate accommodations. The practical result of segregation is always that the Negro is excluded from the best of everything. What is your opinion?

3. Is it true that the Negro race is less capable than the white race? This is a question of fact that cannot be answered merely by citing a few examples of highly intelligent individual Negroes. Try to get more information throwing light on the question. (See bibliography below.)

4. In the preceding account of Dr. DuBois, it was stated that he was a fighter for Negro rights. Is it possible that he might have accomplished more by being less of a fighter and more conciliatory?

5. What can the ordinary young person do to overcome race prejudice and its consequences?

## For Further Reading

Boas, Franz, *The Mind of Primitive Man* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1911), \$2.00.

DuBois, W. E. B., *Black Reconstruction* (New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), \$5.00.

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Leiper, Henry S., *Blind Spots—Experiments in Cure of Race Prejudice* (New York, Council of Women for Home Missions, 1929), \$.60.

Mathews, Basil J., *The Clash of Color* (New York, Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1924), \$.75.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

## *Robert Russa Moton*

*by*

HAROLD B. HUNTING

ROBERT MOTON'S MOTHER was the only colored person for miles around her Virginia home who could read and write. Only a few years before, they had all been slaves; but now that they were free this mother wanted her children to be educated; so she started a little school in her own cabin. The family lived on a large plantation, and in Virginia, as in all the states where Negroes had been slaves, most of the white people were bitterly opposed to education for "niggers." "They can't learn, anyway," it was said. "You might just as well try to teach your mule or your dog to read and write." And even if you did succeed in teaching a black man his letters, so people argued, it would be the worst thing in the world that you could do for him, because after that he would no longer "know his place." So Robert's mother and all the children kept it a secret that she was conducting a little class in reading every evening in her cabin.

One night there was a knock at the door. "Who's there?" they called. "Miss Lucy," was the reply, or in other words, Mrs. Lucy Vaughan, owner of the plantation. There was nothing for those inside to say but "come in," so in walked the great lady and caught them in the act. She saw the blue-backed primer that Robert was reading by the light of the burning logs in the fireplace. But to their astonishment and delight, Mrs. Vaughan not only did not reprove them but was much pleased. "I'm glad you are learning to read," she said, "and if you like to, you may come up to the big house every afternoon and Miss Mollie will teach you." "Miss Mollie" was Mrs. Vaughan's sister. So the next morning, when Robert's father went to town on some errand for the white folks in the "big

house," he bought some new schoolbooks, and after that, for many weeks, both Robert and his mother studied under Miss Mollie.

This little incident goes far toward explaining the character and later career of a man who became one of the most distinguished educators in America. Robert Russa Moton always believed in being friends with white people, even with those who had owned his own parents as slaves. He had learned this lesson from Miss Lucy. Slavery, to be sure, was a wicked institution, but hundreds of good and kind white people found themselves owning slaves and unable to do anything about it, except to treat their own slaves as fairly and kindly as possible. The Vaughans had been just such slaveowners. And after the abolition of slavery, most of their former slaves continued to work on their plantation for wages, and "Miss Lucy" continued to treat the Negroes as kindly and honorably as she knew how. When she died, hundreds of colored people wept for her, for as Dr. Moton later wrote:

There was not a single family, and scarcely a person among them all, who had not at some time or other received some kindness at her hands.<sup>1</sup>

These early experiences gave a set to Robert's character that never changed. That boy whom Miss Mollie taught was always expecting white people to be friendly to him, and usually they *were* friendly. While, in later years, Dr. Moton was never blind to the terrible injustices that his people suffered at the hands of white men, neither could he forget that it was a white Presbyterian minister, the Reverend George H. Denny, who gave him his first Bible, and helped him to read and understand it; that it was a white woman, again Miss Lucy, who organized the first Sunday school that he attended, a school for colored boys and girls that met on Sunday afternoons in the white folks' church; and that his best friend, when he was a boy growing up, was a white lad, George Denny, Jr., son of the minister who had given him his Bible. Many a day as the white boy sat at the dinner table with the Vaughan family, while Robert Moton acted as waiter and served the meal, the two boys would

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<sup>1</sup> *Finding a Way Out*, by Robert Russa Moton (New York, Doubleday Doran and Company, 1920), p. 23. Quoted by permission of the publishers.

wink at each other, which meant that as soon as dinner was over and the dishes washed they would be off for the afternoon on a fishing trip along Sailor Creek. Years later, Dr. Moton expressed a fundamental conviction when he said that most friction between races, as well as individuals, is due to misunderstanding. This conviction grew in part out of those fishing trips along Sailor Creek.

On the other hand, from those early experiences with friendly white people young Moton gained one false idea that he later had to unlearn, and he did not find it easy. He had come to believe that all that was beautiful and fine in the world was associated with the white race and that his own Negro race had nothing original to contribute to mankind. This meant that the only way in which a Negro could hope to rise was to copy white people. It is easy to understand how, to that black lad on the Virginia plantation, Miss Lucy and her white friends seemed to belong to a higher order of beings, like the Greek gods and goddesses on Mount Olympus.

So when later young Moton went to Hampton Institute, that great school for Negroes and Indians, it was a surprise to him to hear the students singing Negro plantation melodies—what we now call “Negro spirituals”—in chapel. He was disappointed:

I had expected to hear regular church music, such as would be sung by white people, and written, I supposed, by white people. These others were Negro songs, and we had come to Hampton to learn something better.<sup>2</sup>

Even when he heard General Armstrong, Hampton’s great founder, speak of the beauty of these old Negro songs, calling them a “priceless legacy of the Negro to America,” the young student was not wholly convinced:

This was the first time in my life that I had begun to think that there was anything the Negro had that was deserving of any special consideration.<sup>3</sup>

Again, it was a shock to the young Negro to discover that not all white people were like the Vaughans, polite, kind, and fair-

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61.

minded. One summer, when he went to work in a Pennsylvania hotel as head waiter to earn money for his education, he was astonished to find white people cursing and getting drunk, and making love to each other's husbands and wives. Another summer he worked in the Wanamaker store in Philadelphia. In his department there were about fifty men, one besides himself colored, and the rest white. Again the boy was shocked to find that white men found so much fault with one another.

And so Robert Moton came to the unhappy realization that while the white people among whom he had grown up had been kind to him, actually most of them had looked down on him, and had taught him to look down on himself and his race. For example, one reason why he had never seen any beauty in Negro songs was that he had heard them sung by white men with blackened faces in "minstrel shows." That meant to him that white people thought these songs funny. Why, then, should they be honored and respected as great and beautiful music? (It is a fact that minstrel shows, without malicious intent on anybody's part, have done an injury to the Negro race.) Moreover, white people had taught him to look down on the kind of work most Negroes perform as menial. The idea seemed to be that educated people never worked with their hands, or at any rate never did anything that might soil their hands or their clothing.

Early in his twenties, Robert Moton spent a year teaching a little country school for Negro children. He had come into the neighborhood early in September and had made all arrangements. But the school was not to be opened until October. He therefore got a job for the month, working on a farm near the school. By this time he had learned at Hampton that all useful work is honorable and that even on a farm—indeed, especially on a farm—there are countless chances for a man of intelligence and education to make use of his assets. But the whole community, black and white, was rocked to its foundations. "A schoolteacher doing farm work!" It must have been embarrassing to the young man, when passing teams halted and the neighbors, eaten up with curiosity, stared over the fence at the new schoolteacher in overalls driving a team of mules or pitching hay. But after school began they found, not only that the young

man was a great success with the children, but also that his "Friday-afternoon lectures" on farming, to which the older people were invited, were full of useful hints that would help them raise better crops.

Through all these experiences Robert Moton was gradually discovering what his own mission in life was to be. He wanted to help the people of his race, and through them to help his country. It was at Hampton Institute that this desire was crystallized into a definite life purpose. We have already mentioned Hampton more than once, and since Robert Moton spent thirty-one years of his life there as student and teacher we should know something about its history and aims, if we would understand his life and character.

Hampton Institute was founded by General Samuel C. Armstrong, who had commanded a regiment of Negro soldiers during the Civil War, and thus had come to love and respect the Negro people. After the war, the country was faced with the problem of what to do with these millions of freed slaves. General Armstrong's answer to this question was "educate them." He believed, however, that it was important to teach them, first of all, what would be of practical use in their daily lives. For most colored boys and girls, this was not Greek and Latin, but how to plant seed, how to raise cows and pigs and chickens, how to use a saw and hammer and plane, how to cook wholesome meals, how to keep a home sanitary, and how to bring up children. This did not mean that all Negroes lacked the ability to learn Greek and Latin, but simply that the most important subjects for anybody to study are those that will be most useful. So, through General Armstrong's efforts, Hampton Institute began its work. Before long, visitors were coming from all over the world to see this new kind of education, and it began to dawn on men's minds that this is the right way to educate white boys and girls as well as colored—that is, to teach nothing that does not have some real meaning for everyday life, and to teach everything by showing first of all what that meaning is. Today, little by little, chiefly in select, "progressive" schools, white children are beginning to receive that same kind of vital, interesting, life-transform-



ing education that Robert Moton and other dark-skinned children of slaves received at Hampton.

Robert's father did not want him to go to Hampton because, as he put it: "Hampton is a work school. I can teach you to work right here at home." But since it was a work school, that meant that the boy could earn part or most of his expenses, instead of paying tuition money. So to Hampton he went, where he was given work in the sawmill and on the farm. Soon he discovered that he was learning a thousand facts about ordinary work that his father never could have taught him; for he was learning to work by the light of scientific knowledge, not by guesswork or tradition. Under the influence of General Armstrong, he was also learning that it is more important to help other people than merely to have a good time. This was the General's life principle, and he impressed it deeply upon every student.

After he had been at Hampton two years, Robert went back to his old home for a two-week vacation. He was surprised to find that everything looked different from what he remembered: The dwellings, the barns, and the fences were unkempt; and there was an air of disorder and confusion about the place and the people, too. Even the church and choir and the pastor's sermons seemed different, and were disappointing and unsatisfactory. It was Mrs. Moton, however, who showed him the truth:

But in my mother's opinion, things were not very different—in many ways they were actually better. The difference was with me. I never before was so impressed with the needs of my community. I was convinced that whatever else I might do, there was nothing more worth while than helping just such people, in just that kind of a community.<sup>4</sup>

Moton's first opportunity to practice this ideal of service was in the little country school already referred to. Every student at Hampton was required to teach school for a year before he received his diploma, as proof that he was ready to use the knowledge he had gained in helping his fellow men. On the first day of school only

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

six children appeared, but soon there were more than a hundred pupils, and it became necessary for the trustees to hire an assistant teacher.

The new assistant believed that knowledge and discipline had to be whipped into children. Every time, therefore, that a child misspelled a word, or failed in a recitation, down came the whip across his shoulders, with the result that nearly every day the whole school would be thrown into confusion by the cries of some child being whipped.

At Hampton, however, Moton had learned a better way of teaching. Since everything he taught had some relation to the lives of his pupils, they wanted to learn and did not need to be whipped. There was a long series of arguments between the two men. Finally, after a threat to carry the matter before the Board of Trustees, the assistant agreed to try out Moton's method. After that, there was no more trouble; and the school was a great success. When Graduation Day came, the school yard was crowded with buggies and horses and mules, and there was not enough room in the school building for the crowds of people who had gathered from all the surrounding region to see this wonderful new kind of school, where children loved to learn and did not need to be whipped.

There was a time when Robert Moton planned to be a lawyer. Indeed, he had studied law and had been admitted to the Virginia bar, which meant that he could practice in the courts of that state. But, little by little, the desire to help people took possession of his heart, and he saw that he might do more good as a teacher than as a lawyer. After his graduation from Hampton, General Armstrong asked him to stay on, at least for a time, as "house father" in a dormitory for Indian students. This temporary appointment stretched out over a quarter of a century.

Moton's work with Indians was a most valuable experience for him. He learned that other peoples besides Negroes had race prejudice to face. On one occasion, for example, the famous Indian fighter, General Nelson A. Miles, visited Hampton. It happened that in Moton's dormitory there was an Indian student, Paul Natchez, whose father had been shot by order of this same general. As commanding officer, General Miles had doubtless thought it necessary,

although most of the wars against the Indians had been provoked by injustice and deceit on the part of white men. At the reception given the general, this student refused to shake hands with him. "The General wants to shake hands with you," whispered Mr. Moton to the boy, thinking he did not understand. "Know it," grunted the Indian. Afterward the boy said:

I ready to go to guardhouse. I stay there a thousand years, but I never shake hands wid' that man. He killed my father. I never shake hands wid' him. I never speak to him.<sup>5</sup>

On another occasion, Moton was teaching a Sunday-school class of Indian students. He was trying to explain what Jesus meant by the Golden Rule. But the members of his class did not seem convinced or interested. Finally, one girl said: "Why is it that white people who call themselves Christians cheated our people? *They* did not keep the Golden Rule."

Thus Robert Moton came to understand still more clearly that not all white people were like the Miss Lucy of his childhood and that, as a result, many of the dark-skinned people of the world are filled with a burning hatred toward all white men. If, therefore, he was to carry out his idea of making friends at all times, with the men and women of the white race, and of leading his own people to co-operate with them, he must somehow find a way to overcome that hatred which the white man himself had kindled in the colored man's soul. Did he find a solution to that problem? We can at least answer that he never ceased to believe that there is a solution to be found, for he spent his whole life co-operating with men of both races.

In 1915, Moton was called upon to be principal of Tuskegee Institute, which was an outgrowth of Hampton. Its founder, Booker T. Washington, had been one of General Armstrong's "boys." Washington started this new school for Negroes at Tuskegee, in Alabama, and made it world-famous, proving that Negroes themselves can carry on the work of a great educational institution, giving to thousands of students the same kind of education for real life that General

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Armstrong and his helpers had given to the students at Hampton. Washington had been close friends with Moton, of whom he once said:

Mr. Moton is a man who makes you believe in him the very first time you meet him, and at the same times makes you love him. I have learned from him that one does not need to belong to a "superior race" to be a gentleman.<sup>6</sup>

It was natural, therefore, that Moton should be asked to come to Tuskegee to carry on his friend's work.

During all these years of increasing fame and influence, until his death in 1940, Dr. Moton continued to make friends with both white men and colored men, and to demonstrate his faith in both. In addition to his position as educator, he was a member of the Department of the Church and Race Relations of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, a member of the Advisory Board of the American Interracial Commission, chairman of the United States Commission on Education in Haiti, and a member of the National Advisory Commission on Education in Liberia. It is interesting that although Southerners are supposed to be more prejudiced against the Negro than Northerners, Moton was particularly successful in working with Southern white men to promote movements for interracial good will. Concerning these movements, he wrote:

Knowing the inner working of these movements, and the character and the spirit of the men behind them, I am satisfied that they have in them a force and influence for righteousness which cannot be defeated.<sup>7</sup>

Over the years, there developed in Robert Russa Moton a pride in race and country and self that gave him strength and enthusiasm to carry on at all odds:

Whatever may be the disadvantages of my race in America, I would rather be a Negro in the United States than anybody else in any other country in the world.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

## Questions for Discussion

1. Contrast Dr. Moton with Dr. DuBois (see Chapter III). Dr. DuBois fought for the rights of his race, whereas Dr. Moton spent his life working for his race, trying to help Negro youth. But was not he too, a fighter?

2. In estimating the relative worth of the two men, Dr. Moton and Dr. DuBois, three opinions are possible. Which of these comes nearest your own view?

- a. Dr. DuBois' method of downright protest and opposition is the one that will most help the Negro or any oppressed race. Oppressors never stop oppressing until they are forced to.
- b. Dr. Moton's method is the one that has the best hope of success. Fighting an oppressor only makes him angry. But by conciliating those of a privileged race who mean to do right and act justly, the oppressed will ultimately gain all the rights he deserves.
- c. Both methods are needed, as are both types of men.

3. It used to be said that if all slaveowners had been kind and just masters, Negroes would have been better off as slaves than free. Do you agree? Explain.

4. Some people feel that if all capitalists were fair-minded and kind—good Christians, in other words—there would be no need of labor unions. Do you agree? Explain.

5. Many Negro leaders criticized the vocational education that was given at Hampton and Tuskegee, on the ground that Negro young people were being trained to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the white race. Was that a fair criticism? Explain.

## For Further Reading

Moton, Robert Russa, *Finding a Way Out* (New York, Doubleday Doran and Company, 1920).

# *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor*

by

FRANK WESLEY CLELLAND

ON THE EVENING of November 16, 1904, following the re-election that month of Theodore Roosevelt, friend of the Negro race, to the Presidency of the United States, an audience of more than three thousand persons of both races packed Convention Hall in Washington, D. C., to witness an event of international significance. A chorus of two hundred voices and three distinguished soloists—all Negroes—assisted by “an enlarged United States Marine Band Orchestra of fifty-two pieces”—all white—were seated on the stage awaiting their guest conductor. This unusual audience contained many of the nation’s greatest musicians, critics, and authors; well-known representatives of the financial, social, and political life of the nation; representatives of the Diplomatic Corps; members of the Cabinet; and the President’s secretary, bearing the regrets of the President, who had planned to be present in person. As the vast audience caught sight of the dark-skinned, twenty-nine-year-old “boyish-looking,” quick-moving conductor, it broke into prolonged rapturous applause such as few artists have ever received. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the brilliant Anglo-African composer and conductor, had arrived to conduct the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society one evening in its performance of his most famous work, *Hiawatha*.

Although the acoustics of the hall were poor and the orchestral accompaniment inadequate, the performance was brilliant. The chorus and soloists especially distinguished themselves. As the *Washington Post* said the next day: “The work of the chorus was magnificent from start to finish.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: Musician*, by W. C. Berwick Sayers (London, Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1915), pp. 162f.

The distinguished guest was honored by receptions, gifts, and a personal audience with President Roosevelt at the White House. He also conducted concerts of his works in several other cities before returning home, tremendously pleased and influenced by this first visit, which had been completely successful from the viewpoint of his race, his art, and his reputation.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was born in Holborn, England, August 15, 1875. He was the son of Daniel Hughes Taylor, a West African Negro from Sierra Leone who came to London in the late sixties to complete his college and medical education, and Alice Hare, a young English girl, a near connection of the celebrated family of that name. The father was dark-skinned and short, neat and fastidious in tastes and appearance, charming in manner, and "gifted with an acute, rapidly working mind, and unusual powers of assimilation." But his lack of stability and his meager resources, combined with the circumstances of his medical career, led him to desert his wife and son soon after the latter's birth.

The mother, on the other hand, was devoted to her son. She possessed natural ability, artistic inclinations, and a culture that showed itself in later years in the ease, exactness, and beauty of her son's conversation, and in his wide reading and cultural interests. In spite of the disrupted home and its consequent poverty, the son spent a carefree and happy childhood. His mother soon married again, this time to a working man named Evans.

When Samuel was five, Mr. Holman, with whom the Taylors lived, showed his affection for the child by presenting him with a violin and teaching him such elementary positions on the instrument as to enable him to play well. One day, in 1880, Mr. Joseph Beckwith, a prominent figure in the musical life of Croydon, England, and conductor of the Croydon Theatre orchestra, was giving some private lessons in a house on Waddon New Road of that city when he noticed some urchins outside in the street on their hands and knees, playing marbles in the dust. The music master was so attracted by the appearance of a "well-dressed, curly-headed, dark little boy" among them, "holding a very small-sized violin in one hand and his marbles in the other," that he went out and coaxed the child into the house to play for him. The accuracy of time and tune with which

the lad played some simple violin pieces at sight thoroughly aroused Mr. Beckwith's interest. Upon learning some of the circumstances of this brown-skinned lad's life, he decided to teach him the violin and music generally. For seven years, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was the eager and devoted pupil of this benevolent and prophetic teacher. Such was the chance beginning of one of the most brilliant and creative careers in British musical history.

Coleridge-Taylor's elementary education was secured in the old British school in Tamworth Road, Croydon, where he was recognized as an incipient musician, already marked for distinction in life. At nine, his first composition, produced upon request overnight, was a new setting for "God Save the Queen." His skill as a violinist was exhibited regularly before visitors to the school, a flattery that seemed never to have spoiled him in the least, for he was always as a child shy, quick, nervous, lovable but lonely. He never participated in games and was seldom seen with a companion, being constantly absorbed in his music, as "one predestined and devoted."

The boy was also a singer "with a treble voice, which was not large in compass, but remarkably true and sweet." As his violin had discovered for him his first teacher and benefactor, so his voice discovered for him a second: Colonel Herbert A. Walters, at that time honorary Choirmaster of the St. George's Presbyterian Church of Croydon. In competition with nineteen other boys, Coleridge-Taylor won first prize for singing and was soon admitted to St. George's Choir. Mr. Walters writes:

Thereafter I took him under my special care, and used to have him up to my house in order to teach him some simple theory of music, voice production, and solo singing. He was a most delightful pupil, quick, eager, and with a wonderful ear. I then practically became his guardian, and looked after him until he came of age. He developed a beautiful voice and became solo boy of the choir.<sup>2</sup>

What the boy Coleridge-Taylor might have become had not the protecting and guiding hand of this friendly benefactor come to his aid at this time it is impossible to guess. As it was, he continued his

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.



violin study with Mr. Beckwith and his choir study with Colonel Walters, and soon his instinctive tendency toward composition bore fruit in a set of hymn tunes of great melody and a *Te Deum* of quality.

In 1890, Colonel Walters, faced with the momentous decision of choosing a career for his protégé, decided upon a musical education and chose the Royal College of Music, of which Sir George Grove was the distinguished principal. The shy youth enrolled for the study of the violin, the piano and harmony. He seemed destined to become a master of the violin, but by 1892 abandoned this instrument altogether in favor of the piano, so fundamental to his increasing interest in composition.

With the approval of Sir Grove, Coleridge-Taylor was put under the tutelage of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, whose "fine musicianship, great learning and rigid practicality" proved of immense value to the then eighteen-year-old student. The youth applied himself zealously to composition, revealing extraordinary fertility and quickness in his work. In March, 1893, he won one of the nine competitive scholarships at the college as a composition student; and in two consecutive years, 1895 and 1896, he won the Lesley Alexander prize for composition.

During his six years of college training Coleridge-Taylor had attracted to himself the eyes of the best British music critics; he had composed nearly thirty works, vocal and instrumental, "daringly new in rhythm, varied in style"; and he had overcome his painful timidity and developed his social qualities. When he left Royal College at twenty-one, he was not only a musician of power, but an educated, courteous, and cultured gentleman.

Through the thoughtful generosity of Sir Edward Elgar, dean of English composers, Coleridge-Taylor received a commission to write and conduct an orchestral number for the famous Three Choirs Festival of Gloucester in 1898. *The Ballade in A Minor* was the young musician's contribution, which proved a triumphant success. The great and distinguished audience, momentarily surprised at the appearance of a young African, broke into wild applause, which the following fifteen minutes entirely justified.

The arresting character of the opening theme, the ingenious economy of material throughout, the unexpected transitions, the barbaric strain informing it, and the mastery of material shown in the richness and balance of the orchestration, made quite clear that here was not merely novelty, but the force and inspiration of genius as well. Coleridge-Taylor conducted with dignity and becoming reserve, and concluded the performance in a storm of applause. . . . The lad of promise who went to Gloucester on September 12, returned a day later a recognized master of his art. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Two months later, the young composer's fame was made secure with *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, first performed by the choir and orchestra of the Royal College of Music, and conducted by his famous teacher, Sir Charles Stanford. Sir Arthur Sullivan and other famous musicians were present and joined with practically every London paper in a chorus of appreciation and congratulation to the young composer. The famous *Hiawatha* trilogy—*The Wedding Feast*, *The Death of Minnehaha*, and *The Departure*—completed within a few months, increased his fame but left him financially poor, because his publishers had bought the copyright of the first part for fifteen pounds and the other two for only two hundred and fifty pounds.

On December 30, 1899, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor married Jessie S. Fleetwood Walmisley, a young English girl of considerable musical ability and a fellow student at the Royal College in 1892. Their marriage was ideal; their home life quiet, regular, and contented. Two children were born to them, a son, *Hiawatha*, and a daughter, *Gwendolyn*, both musically gifted.

It was mainly by teaching that Coleridge-Taylor supported his family. At twenty, he was violin instructor in the Croydon Conservatoire of Music. In 1903, he was appointed professor of composition at Trinity College of Music; in 1905, professor of theory and harmony at the Crystal Palace School of Art and Music; and in 1910, professor of composition at Guildhall School of Music—all positions that he held until his death. He was prodigal with his time and

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54f.

talents, and inspired his pupils with immense enthusiasm for both their art and their teacher.

However, Coleridge-Taylor attained greater fame as a conductor. At twenty-three, he accepted, and held for six years, the baton of the Croydon Orchestral Society. From 1902 to 1907, he was conductor of the Rochester Choral Society; in 1904, he became conductor of the aristocratic Handel Society; and in 1906, he organized and conducted until his death the String Players' Club of Croydon. He was also from time to time guest conductor of the leading orchestras and choruses of England and America.

Coleridge-Taylor visited America three times. The first time was in November, 1904, for the occasion described at the opening of this account. The second time was in 1906, to conduct the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Society of Washington, D. C., in its performance of *The Atonement*, *The Quadroon Girl*, and *Hiawatha*. With the assistance of soloists, he also gave recitals in several large cities of the North. At Norfolk, Connecticut, he gave a complimentary recital in recognition of his election as honorary member of the Litchfield County Choral Union. His final visit, in May and June of 1910, was made on invitation to conduct the first two parts of *Hiawatha* and the *Bamboula*, an orchestral rhapsody written for the occasion, at the Union's Twentieth Anniversary. Mr. Carl Stoeckel, wealthy instigator and patron of the union, had agreed to secure for the festival the conductor whose work the members chose to perform. The two works receiving the most votes were Verdi's *Requiem* and Coleridge-Taylor's *Hiawatha*. Fritz Kreisler was the solo violonist and Alma Gluck one of the singers who, together with the New York orchestra of seventy-five pieces, assisted the chorus of eight hundred and seventy-five voices. The performance was a signal triumph for the honored guest, who exclaimed at its conclusion: "This is one of the happiest days of my life."

Coleridge-Taylor's rank as a musician rests more definitely upon his creative work as a composer. Besides *The Ballade in A Minor*, which first won him serious attention, and *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, which established him among the greatest of British composers, there flowed from his fertile and industrious pen a continuous

stream of compositions, orchestral and vocal, many of which rank high in the musical hall of fame. *The Death of Minnehaha*, given at the North Staffordshire Festival in 1899, and *Hiawatha's Departure*, given by the Royal Choral Society in Albert Hall in 1900, completed the world-famous *Hiawatha* trilogy. Commissions for new compositions brought forth *The Blind Girl of Castél-Guillé*, a cantata for the Leeds Festival in 1901; Meg Blane, also a cantata, for the Sheffield Musical Festival in 1902; *The Atonement*, an oratorio or, as the composer chose to call it, a sacred cantata, for the Three Choirs Festival at Hereford in 1903; *Choral Ballads*, settings of Longfellow's poems on slavery for solo voices and chorus, written for, dedicated to, and produced by the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Choral Society of Washington, D. C., in 1904; *Kubla Khan: A Rhapsody for Solo, Chorus, and Orchestra*, produced by the Handel Society in 1906; *Bamboula*, an orchestral rhapsody written and conducted for the Litchfield County Choral Union Festival at Norfolk, Connecticut, in 1910; and *A Tale of Old Japan*, an exquisite setting of the poem by Alfred Noyes, the publication and production of which by the London Choral Society in 1911 were "second only in importance to the appearance of *The Song of Hiawatha*." The composer also accepted the invitation of Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree to write the incidental music for four poetical dramas by Stephen Phillips: *Herod* (1901), *Ulysses* (1902), *Nero* (1906), and *Faust* (1908); and for Shakespeare's *Othello* (1910), to be produced at His Majesty's Theatre.

From the performance of the famous Fisk Jubilee singers, who visited England in the late nineties, Coleridge-Taylor first learned to appreciate the beautiful folk music of his race. Paul Laurence Dunbar, who also visited England in 1896, appeared in a joint recital with Coleridge-Taylor, who set six of the poet's lyrics to music in *African Romances*, which established the composer's reputation as a song writer. Other contributions to Negro music were: *African Suite* (1898); *Toussaint l'Ouverture* (1901), a symphonic poem; *Five Choral Ballads*, set to the words of Longfellow's *Songs of Slavery* (1904); *Twenty-four Negro Melodies Transcribed for the Piano* (1905); *Symphonic Variations on an African Air* (1906); and *Violin Concerto*, dedicated to and played by Maud Powell at the Norfolk Music Festival in June, 1912.

His vitality exhausted by prodigious work and exacting engagements, Coleridge-Taylor suddenly fell ill and shortly passed away on September 1, 1912, at the early age of thirty-seven, cutting short a brilliant career at the threshold of maturity that promised even greater achievements.

Coleridge-Taylor's work as a composer reveals depth of character and height of ideals. He destroyed all compositions that did not receive the full approval of his great teacher, Stanford. Thus he must have destroyed much beautiful music. Unable to satisfy Sir Herbert Tree and himself with the *Children's Intermezzo* in Act III of *Othello*, he made many attempts before "the unexpected light came" to him while riding on a train. He telegraphed, "I've got it!" and the next day's rehearsal verified his message. His ideas came to him everywhere and often unexpectedly, so that frequently he would break off conversation or stop work suddenly to commit his ideas rapidly to paper. His manuscripts, moreover, were models of neatness and legibility. Believing tremendously in hard, painstaking work and in the rigid discipline of the technique of composition that too many musicians lack, Coleridge-Taylor nevertheless cautioned his students against sacrificing creative genius to technical perfection:

But I warn you not to allow harmony and theory to cramp your artistic development. Imagination should also be far more thought of than it is in the playing of music. Technique is not everything. . . . We require less of the lady and gentleman, and more of the man and woman. . . . I appeal for more enthusiasm.<sup>4</sup>

His theory of composition is best expressed in his own words while working on *Hiawatha*:

I take it to be an artistic crime in the musical treatment of a poem to make it subordinate to orchestral effect. The music is only justified if it speaks in the language of the poem.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58. For a vivid description of this quality in the *Hiawatha* trilogy, read "The Great Anglo-African Composer," by Mary Church Terrell, in *The Voice of the Negro* (January, 1905), p. 667.

Although Coleridge-Taylor's formal education beyond grammar school was confined to the field of music, he was also a diligent and discriminating reader of general literature. His was a Macaulay type of mind, so that he read almost as fast as he could turn the pages and remembered with accuracy what he had read. His favorites were Longfellow, the poet of childhood and of a childhood race; the Brownings—the poet because he expressed sympathy for the darker races and was himself of Negro blood, and the poetess because of her exquisite sense of human affection; Shakespeare, the great dramatist, whose verse “read aloud . . . has real grandeur”; the English poets generally, many of whose poems he set to music; and lastly, Alfred Noyes, whose friendship and lyrics alike meant much to him during the last years of his life.

Coleridge-Taylor was proudly conscious of his African blood, but in his college days he vigorously protested against criticism that refused to judge him as “a British musician with an English education . . . in relation to music and not to the music of the Negro only.” But his “pride in and championship of his race developed with his manhood.” He was no doubt conscious of his personal appearance, which his biographer describes at length:

In appearance, he was [at eighteen] undersized, and very thin, but did not give the impression of delicate health; had rather long arms, and a disproportionately large head, covered with thick, short, curly, silken hair. His forehead was without lines, broad, sloping backwards markedly, the brows protruding over the eyes somewhat; the eyes were large, of a light brown, and intensely bright and vivacious; the nostrils were broad, and assisted his hair in revealing his African origin, as did the lips, which were broader than those of the Caucasian. On the whole, it was a face showing intellect, intensity, seriousness, but essentially a good-natured face.<sup>6</sup>

Long before he knew that Robert Browning's grandmother was a Creole, Coleridge-Taylor “felt curious racial affinities” with the poet, whose “expressed sympathy with the darker races,” he thought, was due to “actual blood relationship with them.” Also the theory that

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

Beethoven had Negro blood interested him deeply, and, after his American visit, he observed:

I think that if the greatest of all musicians [Beethoven] were alive today, he would find it somewhat difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to obtain hotel accommodations in certain American cities.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to his first American visit (1904), an American friend sent Coleridge-Taylor "about the greatest book I have ever read by a coloured man, and one of the best by any author, white or black," Dr. DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk*. Later he was a guest of Booker T. Washington's in a Boston home, but although he greatly enjoyed the visit with him and recognized the enormous importance of the work being done at Tuskegee, Coleridge-Taylor could not accept Washington's ideal of limiting Negro education and activities to the utilitarian; he agreed rather with Dr. DuBois, who maintained that all spheres, including the creative and artistic, should be open to his race.

On more than one occasion, Coleridge-Taylor joined in the press debate with those who made unwarranted attacks on his race. To one letter accusing the Negro of a habitual disposition to violate white women, he made an effective reply, in which he quoted Dr. DuBois in an address to white men of the South:

O Southern Gentlemen! If you deplore their (the Negroes') presence here, they ask, Who brought us? When you cry, Deliver us from the vision of intermarriage, they answer that legal marriage is infinitely better than systematic concubinage and prostitution. And if in just fury you accuse their vagabonds of violating women, they also in just fury quite as just may reply: The rape which your gentlemen have done against helpless black women in defiance of your own laws is written on the foreheads of two millions of mulattoes, and written in ineffaceable blood.<sup>8</sup>

Many observers have pointed out the fact that native musical talents of the Negro often go undeveloped in this country because of the social disabilities under which the race suffers. It was fortunate, therefore, for Coleridge-Taylor that he was born in a country where his

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.

color was less of a handicap than it is here, although even in England it occasionally invited the contemptuous epithet "nigger" and for years interfered seriously with his marriage plans. Therefore, the comment of Harvey B. Gaul, after the composer's untimely death, affirms a tragic truth:

This great man in music is a great man in the world's interest because he is a Negro who has succeeded. In this world of caste, creed, and color success is not an attainment—it is an achievement.<sup>9</sup>

Carved on the Carrara marble headstone of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's grave are these lines from the pen of Alfred Noyes:

Sleep, crowned with fame, fearless of change or time,  
Sleep, like remembered music in the soul,  
Silent, immortal; while our discords climb  
To that great chord which shall resolve the whole.

Silent, with Mozart, on that solemn shore;  
Secure, where neither waves nor hearts can break;  
Sleep, till the master of the world once more  
Touch the remembered strings and bid thee wake.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What distinctive contribution to music has come from Africa? Is there a difference between African and American Negro music?
2. In Negro music, note the intimate connection between music and occupation. What kinds of songs resulted?
3. Note the two main themes of the "spirituals," sorrow and joy. Why is their "theology" so largely other-worldly?
4. What is the difference between "ragtime" and "jazz"? Between "spirituals" and "jubilees"?
5. What disability principally prevents the Negro in this country from participating in the great orchestras, choruses, and grand operas: musicianship or color? Are there any other factors involved?
6. What are the opportunities for a musical education for young

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<sup>9</sup> "Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an Afro-British Composer," by Harvey B. Gaul, in *Musician* (August, 1917), Vol. XXII, p. 577.



Negroes in this country today? (See Locke, *The Negro and His Music*, p. 119.)

7. Is it ever honest, ethical, or Christian to subordinate art and the artistic genius to caste, creed, or color?

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## *Richard Allen*

*by*

MARY E. MOXCEY

**I**T WAS AUGUST, 1793. In the humid heat, the inhabitants of Philadelphia panted in a panic of fear. The young American city was paralyzed. The death toll from yellow fever had reached five thousand. No more nurses were to be had, and it was almost impossible to bury the dead. Where could help be found?

The city officials gasped with relief when Richard Allen, "a pleasant-faced, sleek, chestnut-brown gentleman," accompanied by his friend Absalom Jones, offered the assistance of the African Church. It was (mistakenly) thought that Negroes were immune to the fever, so the famous Dr. Benjamin Rush taught these volunteers by the score to administer medical relief and "bleed" the sick (the usual method of treatment). Printed directions for curing the fever were also distributed. Faithfully and tenderly, these colored nurses went where no others would go, caring for the sick and taking out the dead for burial.

Richard Allen was not at this time a bishop; twenty-three eventful years were still to pass before that honor was to be his. Only a half-dozen years before their help was so gratefully accepted by the city fathers, Richard Allen and another of these very Negroes had been dragged from their knees during prayer in the Methodist church where they were accustomed to worship regularly. How was it that the colored community in this city had so soon become respected and secure? The colored people themselves would have said: "Through the leadership of Richard Allen." Who, then, was this man?

Let us go back to the year 1750, when, in this same city of Philadelphia, a son was born to house slaves named Allen belonging to a prominent lawyer, Benjamin Chew. For the first seven years of

his life, the Allens' bright and attractive little boy was a household pet. His owner was a leader in social and political life, and entertained frequently. The conversations of the brilliant guests, lawyers and others, made an indelible impression on the mind of small Richard, who soon realized that there were laws to which to appeal to maintain one's rights and that facts were established by reasoned statements. When financial difficulties made it necessary for Mr. Chew to raise a considerable sum of money, Richard Allen's father, mother, and all four children were sold to a farmer named Stokely, who lived near the city of Dover, in Delaware. So, throughout his childhood and adolescence, Richard was surrounded by parental affection and trained in integrity, truthfulness, and honesty.

When he was seventeen years old, young Allen was dramatically converted in meetings conducted by Methodists, as were also his mother, sister, and an older brother. All were permitted to attend religious meetings regularly, although neighboring planters tried to dissuade Mr. Stokely from "spoiling" his slaves with such indulgence. But Richard and his brother took special pains to see that their owner's crops never suffered, even if it meant that they had to miss a church meeting. This foregoing, on their own initiative, of present good to attain a future goal showed unusual strength of character and made a deep impression on their master and his wife, who yielded to affectionate concern for their slaves' spiritual welfare by having some Methodist preachers come to hold meetings in the "big house." One of these preachers was Freeborn Garretson, whose sermon resulted in the master's inviting the servants to hold prayers, first in the kitchen of the plantation house and then in the parlor, and finally in proposing that the Allen brothers purchase their freedom. Because he was in debt, Mr. Stokely could not free them without compensation, but "the sum of 60 pounds in gold and silver currency" was earned by each during the same year of their conversion, 1777.

Free in soul and body, but adrift in the world and without adequate preparation for some definite life task, at seventeen years of age Richard Allen faced an uncertain future. The Revolutionary War was then in progress. In the words of Bishop Asbury: "Religion was almost banished from some neighborhoods where it had been

pretty lively." This young free Negro had at first to earn his way by cutting wood or "toting" loads of bricks. But as he worked, he preached; and all the while he prayed that "the Lord would open some way," often waking from his sleep to pray with great fervor.

Slowly the way did open. A job of driving a team, hauling bags of salt, gave him acquaintance with new persons and new places, a broadening experience that his biographer likens to the caravan driving of Mahomet. At the close of the war, Allen became a regular itinerant Methodist "local preacher," traveling in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. In many places the majority of his congregation were white people, who were so impressed by his preaching that they said: "This man must be a man of God." In spite of attacks of fever and inflammatory rheumatism, he traveled thousands of miles. Although his name is not listed as a member of the Christmas Conference at Baltimore in 1784, at which American Methodism was organized, he describes incidents at that meeting which indicate that he probably was there.

About that time, Bishop Asbury asked Richard Allen to accompany him on a preaching tour through the Deep South. Facing the difficulties of a free Negro, who must not associate with slaves but sleep in the carriage, and the danger of illness with no provision for care, Allen wisely decided to return to Pennsylvania. There he entered business for himself and preached on Methodist circuits without payment. Yet these frequent contacts with Asbury, Whatcoat, Benjamin Abbott, and other makers of American Methodism were an invaluable part of his education, as he freely and gratefully acknowledged.

In 1786, Richard Allen was asked to preach occasionally in St. George's Methodist Church in Philadelphia. For the first years following the Revolution, the spirit of independence and freedom that separated the churches as well as the colonies from England led to a sympathy with all oppressed groups, and the churches showed little discrimination. Richard Allen felt even then that it was wise for free Negroes to organize themselves, but neither the whites nor the blacks in St. George's would consent. However, as the number of Negro members grew, there was increasing discrimination; the white members felt them to be a "nuisance."

The crisis came about in this way: The colored members had been notified that their seats were to be changed. On the following Sunday, as they neared the seats they thought had been designated for them, the elder began the prayer. As they knelt, they were jostled and, opening their eyes, found white officials dragging two of them from their knees, although they had said: "Wait until the prayer is over, and we will trouble you no more." When the prayer was finished the group of Negro members "all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church."<sup>1</sup> Thus was crystallized the problem of the free Negro in a country where prejudice was increasing. Liberty, freedom, and democracy were for white people only, even in the churches.

Richard Allen was the first of his race to see that Negroes had to be made group-conscious and work for freedom by their own efforts. Although he himself regarded his people as an oppressed minority, needing aggressive leadership to achieve its own emancipation, and did not understand that their exploitation was an economic phenomenon, Allen began his leadership in the first economic organization in Negro life, the Free African Society. This was a benevolent and reform society, requiring from its members monthly dues. After dues had been allowed to accumulate for a year, the organization was ready to pay a weekly benefit to needy members, "provided the necessity was not brought upon them by their own imprudence." No drunkard or disorderly person could be a member. The society deposited its funds in the oldest of American banks (in Philadelphia), and proceeded on sound financial lines, forming also branches in other cities.

Members of the Free African Society then decided to form a church—the one that offered its help in the yellow-fever epidemic. When they decided to join the Episcopalians Allen "disunited himself" from them because he believed that Methodism was better adapted to the colored people. But he retained his warm friendship for Absalom Jones, who became their minister. Later, when a charter was obtained for a Masonic lodge for Negroes in Philadelphia,

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Life, Experiences, and Gospel Labors of the Right Reverend Allen, Written by Himself*, by Richard Allen (Philadelphia, 1793).

Jones was installed as worshipful master and Allen as treasurer. Thus Richard Allen helped to initiate another aid to his race in training them to work together in an organized capacity, in social and fraternal as well as religious fields.

Meanwhile he was himself becoming a substantial property owner and a leading citizen of Philadelphia, who "knew how to conduct himself with any persons and in any situation." He employed chimney sweeps and was the proprietor of a shoemaking establishment. Following his sincere convictions, although opposed by both the Free African Society and the Methodist Church, he led in the organization of a Negro Methodist Society. When this organization decided to build a church, Allen purchased a lot near the colored section of the city, for which he himself paid when they chose instead a site in the center of town; for it was his rule never to break a promise or violate a contract. His spoken word was always taken at face value.

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was dedicated by Bishop Asbury in July, 1794, the year after the yellow-fever epidemic. Although the little group of members realized that they were in some sense discriminating against themselves by segregation, yet they

... had no other view therein but the glory of God and the peace of the church, by removing what was in a measure treated and described as a nuisance on the one hand and an insult on the other, endeavoring through grace to avoid the appearance of evil and to seek peace with all men, especially them that are of the household of faith.<sup>2</sup>

Firmly convinced that the building that the Negroes had paid for should belong to them and not to the white conference, Allen created a body of trustees and incorporated them under the laws of Pennsylvania, with provision that only colored persons were to be chosen as trustees. He now proceeded to establish a day school, a Sunday school, and also a night school, thus providing for both religious and secular instruction of children and adults.

Richard Allen was trustee, local preacher, and acknowledged leader, but not pastor of his church until, on June 11, 1799, Bishop Asbury ordained him deacon, thus making him the first Negro in

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the United States ordained by the (as yet only and undivided) Methodist Episcopal Church in America.

About this time a "slave speculator," one of those who seized free Negroes and sent them back to slavery in the South for a reward, claimed Allen as an escaped slave. A warrant was granted, but the constable would not even arrest the preacher, but had him come to the alderman's office and gave him his liberty. Allen hired a lawyer and brought a civil suit against the speculator who, unable to raise bail, was three months in the debtors' prison. Then, feeling that he had learned his lesson and would not again try to seize free Negroes, Allen requested the man's release. This magnanimity on Allen's part added to the esteem in which he was held by the leading citizens of Philadelphia.

Allen's open-mindedness toward innovations is shown by his treatment of women. In 1803 an English woman, Dorothy Ripley, asked to preach in Bethel Church. She was refused by the Board, who found it "diametrically opposed to the letter and spirit of the rules of the society in particular and the *Discipline* in general." However, she was given an opportunity to speak at the close of a sermon. In 1809, Garena Lee felt called to preach, but again "the Methodist *Discipline* did not call women preachers." Eight years later Mrs. Lee requested and received permission to hold a prayer meeting in a rented house to exhort the people to Christian living. So good was her work that she was soon given an opportunity to preach at Bethel Church, and Allen expressed his conviction that she was as much called to the work as any of the preachers who were present. Mrs. Lee then began to travel as a missionary, and her preaching resulted in many conversions and new members to the church. While she was not ordained, she did receive her "licensed papers," permitting her to serve as a local preacher.

By this time it was "Bishop" Allen, which came about in this way: The Bethel Church in Philadelphia became an ideal for groups of free Negroes in Baltimore, New York, and other communities. Societies were organized, property purchased, and preachers hired—at first mostly white preachers from the Methodist conferences. As a result of correspondence between the smaller groups in near-by cities, a convention assembled in Philadelphia on April 9, 1816, at which it

was resolved to organize a "connection" under the name of the African Methodist Church of the United States of America. They adopted the *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church, "until further orders." Richard Allen was elected Bishop to supervise the new "connection" that is, he was made bishop, not by the Methodist Episcopal Church, but by the church that he had founded. Before the next Negro convention assembled, Bishop Allen had died on March 26, 1831. Contemporaries described his impressive funeral, and the grief and reverence of Negroes of all sects.

Richard Allen was not a great orator; his words were plain and simple. The hymns that he wrote expressed his own and his people's ideas in their own language, instead of seeking to copy the ideas and forms of English literature. In church, school, and fraternal society, it was Richard Allen's plan to foster the independent organization of Negroes. He did not seek to sever relations with the church bodies that had given him his opportunities, but felt that self-help and self-management were the only truly effective means of meeting the discrimination directed against this underprivileged group. Those who did not wish to organize themselves separately were at liberty to retain their union with the whites, for he wanted no bitterness or animosity to develop between the two groups of Negroes.

While all Negroes in the United States are now legally "free Africans," in achieving freedom from their present economic and social slavery they still need to practice the moral ideals, the magnanimity toward personal indignities, and the will to co-operate that Richard Allen exemplified. Today, as then, only spiritual religion will furnish the inexhaustible motive and driving power for ultimate success. Unflinching faithfulness was the secret of Bishop Allen's eighty-one fruitful years as organizer and Christian.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Read the several definitions of "genius" in an unabridged dictionary. In what sense, if any, was Richard Allen a Negro genius?
2. Which factor gave Allen's work the greater permanence: his mystical religious experiences, or his ability to organize average people? Could he have accomplished his work lacking either ability?
3. a. How much of value in his development can be accredited to the



fact, unusual for a slave, that Allen remained with his own family until he was grown up?

- b. Are present conditions in your community depriving any large number of Negro children of the security of affection and wholesome moral training that Allen enjoyed in his own home? Even if you know only one or two such instances, what if the world loses a potential Richard Allen?
4. What other factors in Allen's environment contributed to the success of his projects?

## Projects

1. Find out the present membership and extent of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and its standards for its ministers. Compare with the descriptions in *Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom*, of his first Annual and General Conferences.

2. Arrange with the young people of the nearest church (Negro if you are white, white if you are Negro) of any denomination for an evening of comparative church history, presenting the historic reasons for the founding of each denomination represented and reviewing its achievements for the kingdom of God.

3. Find some civic enterprise affecting the economic welfare of Negro citizens (housing, removing restrictions on employment, equal opportunity for learning skilled trades and professions, equal appropriations for public schooling or teacher training, etc.) and discover how all racial groups can co-operate. Then carry out the plan.

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## *Frederick Douglass*

by

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AT AN ANTI-SLAVERY MEETING, held at Nantucket in 1841, someone noticed the presence of a young Negro. Knowing that he had recently escaped from slavery, this person asked the Negro to say a few words.

The assembly saw a young man twenty-four years old, more than six feet tall, straight as an arrow and lithe as a panther, with handsome features, wavy black hair, and brown eyes that were soft or flashing by turns. They listened to a voice of mellow timber and great range and power. Although the young Negro in his own account of the experience speaks mostly of his stagefright, William Lloyd Garrison declared that Patrick Henry never made a more eloquent speech. At last the millions of slaves toiling dumbly had found a voice of their own to make known to the free citizens of the nation, and to men and women of good will in all the countries of Europe, the injustices, suffering, and despair under which they labored. At once, began Frederick Douglass' career as a public lecturer.

Because the public was eager to know something definite about "this alleged slave," by 1845 it seemed wise to publish his *Narrative*. From it and other sources we know the heights and depths of experience that dramatized in his own life the sufferings and possibilities of his race.

In 1817, the year that another slaveborn leader of the Negro people, Richard Allen, held the first Annual Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born in Tuckahoe, Maryland. During the first seven years of his life he likewise was affectionately treated, well fed, and trained in honesty, truth, and good manners. In contrast to Allen, however,

his environment was not the luxurious city home of a northern professional man, but a slave cabin on the eastern shore of Maryland. His mother was employed on a plantation twelve miles away. Only love for her child could have winged her feet to traverse that whole distance after sundown and back to the fields before dawn. These visits, though infrequent, were the memorable events of his early life. His white father is unknown, because before the little lad could even be curious about him his mother and his grandmother were dead. His mother's mother, who cared for him, was a slave married to a free Negro, Isaac Bailey. Her only task was the care of children—mostly her grandchildren, for she had five daughters. Thus secure in the affection of his mother and his grandparents, for those seven carefree years Frederick experienced the sunny side of slavery.

Suddenly, this sunny world came to an end. But after twenty-one hard years, the young man succeeded in earning some money and finally effected his escape. In September, 1838, he made his way by train from Baltimore to New York City. The details of his escape are not as harrowing as those of many another, so that with courage and good luck he found himself on free soil.

At once he sent for the young woman, a free Negress, who had promised to be his wife. New friends in New York City, however, warned him of danger there and sent him on to New Bedford, Massachusetts. Here he was befriended by Nathan Johnson, a free Negro of superior character and mentality, who suggested that he change his name. So, having just read Scott's *Lady of the Lake* and fancying a resemblance to its hero, Frederick Bailey became Frederick Douglass.

Douglass found himself barred by race prejudice in the North from practicing his skilled trade, but he put zeal, intelligence, and cheerful industry into the most menial tasks, his heart all the while singing with the joy of freedom. Prejudice was here too, yes; but there were also strong movements in behalf of his race. It was to hear some of these heroes of his hopes that Douglass took a holiday from his work in New Bedford to attend the meeting at Nantucket which opened the way into his lifework.

It is interesting to note that Frederick Douglass, the orator, avoided the emotional and verbal excesses of many speakers for abolition. He

had the special grace and gift of good taste. That brings up the pertinent question: Where did Frederick Bailey, the orphan slave boy, derive the intelligence and superior graces that made him Frederick Douglass, the orator and emancipator of his people? He himself always attributed his intelligence and natural powers to his mother, of whom he saw little. She was tall and handsome, with regular features, glossy black skin, and the dignity and manners of a princess; indeed, years later, her son saw a striking resemblance to her in a picture of the Egyptian king, Rameses the Great. She was, moreover, the only Negress in Tuckahoe who could read.

When Douglass' *Narrative* appeared, the publicity of detailed facts, together with his growing popularity, increased his peril of recapture. So apprehensive friends, overruling his objections, hurried him away to England. The refusal of the Cunard liner to give a colored man cabin accommodations aroused indignation among the passengers. Douglass, accustomed to such humiliations, had made himself at home in the steerage; but he was soon welcomed and honored in every part of the ship. A few young Southern men threatened to throw him overboard, and as soon as they reached Liverpool published derogatory statements about him. These merely served to increase the already great interest of the British people in this anti-slavery orator.<sup>1</sup>

Many urged Douglass to stay in England, but he said that no inducement could be strong enough, because, whether slave or free: "America is my home, and there I mean to spend and be spent in the cause of my outraged fellow countrymen." Concerned lest he be re-enslaved upon his return, Mrs. Ellen Richardson of the Society of Friends, together with others, raised the purchase price of his freedom and obtained the manumission papers, "sealed and delivered," on December 5, 1846.

His English friends also presented Douglass with two thousand, five hundred dollars to enable him to publish a newspaper in the interest of his people. Douglass sought a field where his venture

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<sup>1</sup> For two of Douglass' speeches in England, see *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, by C. G. Woodson (Washington, D. C., Associated Publishers, 1925), pp. 158-177.

would not interfere with the circulation of other abolitionist papers, and so Rochester, New York, became his home for the next quarter of the century. Here, in December, 1847, the *North Star* appeared in the journalistic firmament. It now developed that Douglass could write as well as speak, so that for ten years he became one of the greatest influences against slavery, maintaining a high standard in form as well as content. Moreover, this experience with writing helped him think with greater logic and marshal his facts with exactness, to convince without the magic of his voice, with the result that his oratory became even more forceful.

The 1850's were crowded not only with speaking and writing, but with participation in the Underground Railroad. Douglass concealed as many as eleven fugitives at a time in his own home in Rochester and sent hundreds of them safely into Canada, paying their fare on the train and giving them half a dollar extra. For this and the expenses of his paper, he had to raise money. So these years were filled with speeches to gatherings of interested people, and he was invited and welcomed far and wide.

Douglass spent much of his effort in meeting anti-Negro prejudice in the North, which had long been cultivated by the American Colonization Society.<sup>2</sup> Other orations were directed toward securing industrial schools for colored youth. The Fugitive Slave Law and the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, added to the popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, aroused more intense interest in the struggle. Everyone with a conscience was seeking a plan of action.<sup>3</sup>

Events were moving rapidly and soon war was declared. Douglass' matchless oratory was now used in raising colored troops, and his personal influence in securing for them equal recognition in pay, promotion, and treatment as prisoners of war—a task just as difficult eighty years later! The personal conversations between Douglass and President Lincoln were touching and significant, and one of Douglass' greatest orations was given at the time of Lincoln's assassination, at a meeting in the Rochester courthouse. Douglass had

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 178-191.

<sup>3</sup> *Frederick Douglass*, by Booker T. Washington (Philadelphia, Macrae Smith and Company), out of print, pp. 247-255.

not been asked to speak, but the audience insisted. A friend said:

I have heard Webster and Clay in their best moments; Channing and Beecher in their highest inspirations. I never heard truer eloquence; I never saw profounder impression. When he finished the meeting was done.

With the close of the Civil War, the abolition workers had completed their task. But Frederick Douglass realized that the greatest work of his life still lay ahead, in the "post-victory world" of his day. Work for the release of the colored people from the effects of slavery must be begun at once and continue indefinitely. His voice was raised effectively in appeals for the franchise and for repeal of the "option measure" that would have made the franchise a matter of state decision. To consider the question of Negro suffrage, a National Loyalists' Convention was held in Philadelphia in the fall of 1866. Delegates were sent from all parts of the Union, Douglass was the official delegate from Rochester. On the way delegates tried to persuade Douglass not to appear, and when they formed in procession all snubbed him but a prominent white aristocrat, Theodore Tilton, who cordially asked if he might walk with him. The ovation that Douglass received all along the line quite changed the attitude of the delegates, and another of his powerful and convincing orations won the support of the entire convention for his resolution.

Soon Douglass moved his residence to Washington, D. C. Among the honors accorded him there was his appointment as councilman of the District of Columbia and, later, his election to the legislature of the District. President Grant appointed him secretary to the commission to San Domingo. Although its mission failed, Douglass' sincerity in following his convictions retained for him the friendship of both those who favored and opposed statehood for San Domingo. Under President Hayes, Douglass was appointed marshal of the District of Columbia. Only his tact, intelligence, and good taste overcame the bitter opposition of social prejudice which he withstood, not for the sake of personal prestige, but for the honor of his race.

Douglass' last office under the United States Government was that

of minister resident and consul general to the Republic of Haiti, an unsought honor from President Harrison. During the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, in 1893, the Government of Haiti made Douglass its commissioner. There, in an artistic pavilion on the fair grounds, he was host from May to November, sharing honors with the representatives of all civilized governments. Speaking for the brotherhood of man, Douglass made the two greatest speeches of his life, one on Negro Day and the other before a parliament on good government.

During his public service and the last peaceful years in his beautiful home on Anacostia Heights, Frederick Douglass was ready to give all his powers to every movement for freedom. He was a strong supporter of women's rights to the ballot and of the liberal movements in religion. He generously responded to every call, whether from an obscure literary society or Sunday school, or from some national convention.

On February 2, 1895, Douglass returned home after attending a meeting of the Council of Women in Washington. He was in high spirits and conversed animatedly. After dinner, he prepared a speech for a colored Baptist church near by. On his way to the carriage, waiting at the door, he fell to his knees in the hall, and straightened himself on the floor. When Mrs. Douglass reached him, he was dead—

. . . without pain, without warning, without fear, and at a time when life was sweet, full, and complete. His last moment of enthusiasm, like his first hours of aspiration when a slave child, was for liberty; if not for himself, then for someone else.<sup>4</sup>

### Questions for Discussion

1. How many persons have you heard whom you would call orators? What is your test of true oratory?

2. How much of the effect upon you of oratory is due to the speaker's voice? How much to his personality? How much to the logical presentation of substantiated facts?

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341.

3. In the great issues of the present day, can newspaper and radio take the place of the lecture platform and convention assembly?

4. Compare Frederick Douglass with Bishop Allen (Chapter VI) and Doctor Williams (Chapter VIII) with regard to the influence on the development of their genius of the following factors: inherited ability; early home life; personal religious experience; and seemingly chance factors (such as early listening to brilliant lawyers, buying the *Columbian Orator*, serving in the barber shop patronized by a great surgeon). Which of these factors had the most influence on the lifework of each man? Which had the most influence in integrating their personalities?

5. Because great genius has overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles, is it wiser to let the geniuses of the present generation struggle to the top or for society to seek to discover and develop them?

## Projects

1. Secure one or both of the books containing some of Frederick Douglass' orations. Compare them with the outstanding orations of such men as Demosthenes, Stephen Douglass, William Jennings Bryan, and one or two persons whom your English teacher rates as great contemporary public speakers—perhaps President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill.

2. In your study club or young people's group, arrange for a public presentation of excerpts from these great orations. Let each speaker preface the quotation with a brief statement of the historic situation and the special occasion that called it forth. What made each fitting and effectual?

3. Decide what cause is most urgently in need of public understanding in your community (such as liquor control; the extension of school, library, or playground facilities; overcoming of race discrimination; etc.) and consider the value of public speeches in securing understanding. Discover who among your own age group can most convincingly present the issue. Will your success be wisely or unwisely limited if you confine your efforts to persons of your own age or social set, to members of your own race?

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## *Daniel Hale Williams*

by

MARY E. MOXCEY

AFTER THE CLOSE of the war between the states, the only boys who could look forward to high school and college education as a matter of course were those with rich families. Some others did get through, but it was much harder then than now to "work one's way." It was almost impossible if one's father were dead and one had to help support a family, most of whom had no sympathy with "foolish, highfalutin" ambitions.

Nevertheless some succeeded even then—Dan Williams, for one. During the summer, he earned money by playing in orchestras on Great Lakes steamers, for he was a good violinist; during the school year he worked in the local barber shop. Thus he succeeded in being graduated from high school and later from Hare's Classical Academy, in Janesville, Wisconsin.

What next? His intense ambition was to be a surgeon. At that time there were no premedical courses in college. The only preparation for medical school was to serve an apprenticeship with a practicing physician—driving his horse; helping with anesthetics and bandages; and, in the long waits while the doctor was making calls, "reading medicine" from the books in the doctor's library. There seemed no place for Daniel to begin, so for some reason he began instead to study law. Perhaps it would be the only profession possible to him.

Suddenly the way opened. One of the patrons of that Janesville barber shop was the famous Surgeon General Henry Palmer, who, during the Civil War, had rendered distinguished service on the staff of General Grant. Perhaps General Palmer noticed the "likely boy" who cut his hair and asked him questions; perhaps his kindli-

ness encouraged the shy young law student to tell of his ambition. At any rate, the great surgeon invited the young genius to "read medicine" in his office and accompany him on his rounds, and was a great inspiration to him.

After two years under Doctor Palmer's tuition, in 1880 young Williams entered Chicago Medical College (now the Medical School of Northwestern University) and was graduated in 1883. Immediately he began a year's internship at Mercy Hospital, in Chicago, after which he entered private practice. Almost at once he was appointed surgeon to the South Side Dispensary and demonstrator of anatomy at his Alma Mater. Many of his students later became leaders in the profession. In 1887, Doctor Williams was appointed a member of the Illinois State Board of Health and was reappointed in 1891.

To complete this typical Alger story of poor-boy success, we need only to go back from 1884, when Daniel Hale Williams, M.D., "hung out his shingle" in a fashionable office in Chicago, to the year 1856, when he was born in Pennsylvania—the state where, a full quarter of a century before, Bishop Allen had ceased his valiant labors. There in Hallidaysburgh, Daniel Williams, a white man, and Sarah Price Williams, his free Negro wife, on January 18 welcomed their sixth child. In young Daniel's early childhood, the family lived for a time in Baltimore and in Annapolis, Maryland, where he attended the Stanton School. After his father's death, his mother took the family first to Rockford, Illinois and later to Janesville.

Although in features and coloring he differed little from the white lads at school, yet Daniel mingled little with them. Handsome but shy, the lad was so completely occupied with his schoolwork and money earning that he could scarcely lift his studious eyes from his personal goal. Now, at the age of twenty-eight, he had "arrived."

From this time on throughout his career, the popular and distinguished surgeon had his private office in a building devoted to doctors and dentists, and his patients included many of the wealthiest and most socially prominent families of Chicago. Perhaps none of these would have suspected that this handsome professional man with the close-cropped hair was a Negro; but, like the young prince of ancient Egypt, "when he was grown, he went out unto his breth-

ren and looked upon their burdens.”<sup>1</sup> Among them he found other “likely boys” with ambition to heal, and capable girls who would make desirable nurses. But, although colored men could graduate from medical schools in Illinois, the state law required a year’s internship in a standard hospital before one might receive a license to practice, and not a hospital in the state would admit a colored interne or nurse for training. (Apparently no question had been raised about Doctor Palmer’s brilliant protégé.) In fact, the only way a young colored woman could earn a living was as a chambermaid or washerwoman.

In 1891, the Negro population of Chicago was about fifteen thousand, and there were just five Negro physicians—two of them so light-skinned that they did not think it wise to take any part in promoting any movement in behalf of their race. Here was the test of the greatness of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams’ soul. Determined that Chicago should have a hospital in which Negro doctors and nurses could receive adequate training, he founded Provident Hospital, and thereby faced the greatest opposition of his own people and jealousy of their leaders that anyone of his race has had to meet. As a co-worker of those early years has said: “Our people have a strange faculty for opposing instead of co-operating with every advance.”<sup>2</sup>

The struggle was drawn on the issue of “segregation.” Many of the colored preachers fought vehemently against the “discrimination” involved in a hospital for colored patients and doctors and nurses. They accused Doctor Williams of seeking a means of getting rid of his colored patients in the County Hospital in order that he could devote himself to his wealthy white clientele. A prominent colored lawyer, known as “Indignation Jones” because he was “against” almost any suggestion, was at that time head of the colored Masons of the world. He held meetings and organized street demonstrations in revolt, proclaiming: “Better that Negroes should die in the streets and be eaten up by the flies than have a separate hospital!”

But “Doctor Dan” kept up his courage and founded his hospital. Its financial support was, naturally, mostly from his well-to-do white

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 2:11. Cf. Hebrews 11:24, 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 7:22-25.

friends—the Palmers, Kohlsaats, Armours, Cudahys, and others—which only threw more fat in the fire of Negro resentment! At the same time, the fact that he stoutly identified himself with the colored race lost him many of his white patients. This would have been a hard experience for anyone, but for one as sensitive as Dr. Williams, who, never having learned the give-and-take of discussing public questions, felt that disagreement was tantamount to opposition, it was excruciating torture. Yet he kept on, and the hospital was built—in a small way at first, but as a place where Negro doctors and nurses could be trained to serve human need.

This hospital, like Doctor Williams' own professional service, was maintained according to the highest standards. For example, when he began his surgical career, asepsis was an innovation, laughed at by many of the most famous of the old-school practitioners. But "Doctor Dan" consistently followed the most stringent aseptic methods and insisted upon their use in Provident Hospital. It was there, in 1893, that he performed the first successful surgical closure of a stab wound of the heart and pericardium. The accounts in the public press made him internationally famous, but it was not reported in medical circles until 1897, when an article in the *Medical Record* of March 27 described the technical procedure and stated that the patient was alive and well three years afterward. Hence the *Journal of the American Medical Association* attributed the first suture of the heart to Doctor Cappelán, in 1895. Later the United States Army Librarian, in response to a letter from Doctor Kenney, established the priority of Doctor Williams' successful operation. He also perfected a suture for arrest of hemorrhage from the spleen.

It is little wonder that, in 1893, President Cleveland called this greatest surgeon of his race, and one of the greatest of his time regardless of race, to become Surgeon in Chief at the Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D. C. There Dr. Williams remained until 1898, completely reorganizing the institution in line with the highest standards of the time and, in addition, organizing a training school for colored nurses. When his work there was done, he married Alice D. Johnson, a teacher in the public schools of the Capital city, and returned to Chicago and his beloved Provident Hospital.

In 1899, Doctor Williams was appointed professor of clinical sur-

gery on the staff of Meharry Medical College at Nashville, Tennessee; and he began a series of clinical visits to that institution in 1900. He inaugurated a surgical clinic that had a vast influence in spreading high scientific and ethical ideals of professional work. Hundreds of Meharry graduates testified to the impressions made upon them by this enthusiastic clinical lecturer from the North. From 1900 to 1906, he was attending surgeon at the Cook County Hospital, where he made the most of the abundant clinical opportunities offered; and many of his former internes, some of them now heads of departments in various medical colleges, testify to the esteem and respect in which his ability was held by his colleagues, regardless of color. In 1909, Wilberforce University conferred upon him the degree of LL.D.

Some of the factors in human nature that Doctor Williams simply couldn't understand, however, were cropping up in the project that was dearest to his heart. He had dreamed that Provident Hospital was to be his crowning glory, but it seemed that other stars were rising in that firmament. Men whom he had trained and, in a very real sense, "made" were not only able physicians but were more adroit than he in managing situations and securing personal adherents, and they naturally gained ascendancy. It was here that he suffered irreparably from the omission of some essential social factors in the development and integration of his personality. In the Northern town where he struggled for his higher schooling, there seems not to have been available to him the life in Negro churches and lodges, those great folk schools in which his race so largely learns to obey rules and manage men. He was next to the youngest child in his family, and his school studies and money-earning activities had left little or no time to join others of his own age, either in social good times or in the rough-and-tumble of boy groups. Two of his older sisters encouraged his ambitions (and he always remembered them with gratitude), but the other members of the family misunderstood and disapproved, so that the consequent discord drove the boy farther within himself. Thus, as one of his friends put it: "He was brought up alone, and didn't know men or how to adjust himself to them."

Hence, surprised and hurt, and with "not an atom of strategy in

his make-up," Doctor Williams resigned (in 1912) from the staff of Provident Hospital. Many of his friends felt that it was a mistaken move, and he himself later regretted it. But while he could wage a royal battle for the medical education of his people, he could not fight for his own place among them. So he accepted a position open at St. Luke's Hospital in Chicago—the only Negro ever on their staff—where he remained from 1912 until his death. Many felt that this step was an act of disloyalty to his institution and to his race, as his new work kept him somewhat apart from the colored members of his profession. This added misunderstanding exaggerated his introversion and embittered his last years.

The very next year, 1913, Dr. Williams was invited to become a charter member of the American College of Surgery. This association parallels the famous British organization and is equally jealous of its standards. It now includes all the Americas. Doctor Williams was well qualified for the honor, which he shared with such other famous surgeons as the Mayo brothers and Doctor Crile. Although he never boasted of this honor or of the great men whom he had trained (they were always his greatest pride), many construed his sensitive shyness and his native dignity as "uppishness" or snob-bishness.

As time went on, Dr. Williams withdrew more and more into himself, became suspicious even of his friends, and toward the last no one could get really close to him. A blood poisoning from an operation he performed in 1921 added to his difficulties, as he never really recovered from it and was ill for the last ten years of his life. His wife, who had so long been his "balance wheel," died in 1927. After that, he brooded even more over the imagined slights from which he suffered. Yet he continued to serve mankind with his gifts until his death, on August 4, 1931.

As a surgeon, his work was marked by profound anatomical knowledge; a thorough understanding of physiology, normal and pathological; and an uncanny surgical judgment. Although much of his work was done in the amphitheatre, he never lost sight of the supreme interest of the patient in an appeal to the spectacular. As an operator, his attention to technical detail was meticulous. He was the methodical rather than the virtuoso type of surgeon.

Throughout most of his life, Dr. Williams had no distinct religious affiliations or interests, although his family was Roman Catholic and his wife Episcopalian. Perhaps the fact that, when he was a student, the churches were shaken by the so-called opposition of science to religion made him feel that the Church was not in sympathy with his devotion to the advance of science. Nevertheless, he appreciated the way that Bishop Brown and Doctors Jennifer and Reynolds of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Reverend Knight of the Baptist Church, stood by him in the early controversies over the founding of Provident Hospital. During his last ten years of life, however, he began to take an interest in the Roman Catholic Church in his community. In this Church he was baptized and from it he was buried, and he remembered it generously in his will.

It is a tragedy that so great and so fine a man should have suffered so much unnecessarily, in addition to the real and inevitable wounds that must be endured by every genius who works for the advancement of oppressed humanity. But while many factors tended for a while to obscure the true greatness of his contributions, clouds are now clearing away and the facts are beginning to show in historic perspective. Without in any way detracting from the real and great contributions of his later contemporaries and successors, his is the honor of being the pioneer "missionary" of medical training for his people, "a veritable Moses to the Negro medical profession." Provident Hospital and Training School, Freedmen's Hospital and Training School, and Meharry Surgical Clinic set the high standard brilliantly followed by the Negro medical profession. All this was the work of a man whose race had enjoyed barely twenty years of freedom when this remarkable genius joined the trail blazers of the more favored race. Throughout a professional life of nearly fifty years he remained in the vanguard.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Does genius make it harder for the person possessing it to understand and co-operate with "average" people? Why, or why not?
2. Whatever the reasons for misunderstood genius, whose is the respon-



sibility for taking the initiative in making his contributions available to society?

3. How could an active church life have helped Doctor Williams?

4. Was it worth while for Doctor Williams to give his life to helping unappreciative and jealous people, or could he have contributed more to the world by confining his efforts to strictly scientific work under congenial conditions?

## Projects

1. Find out the following facts:

a. What are the provisions for medical care of Negroes in your community?

b. Are they equal to those for white people? For other races?

c. Are they adequate in amount?

d. What opportunities for medical and nursing training are open to Negroes in your state?

e. Where do your finest Negro physicians go for their training?

f. How many of the training schools for nurses in your city or state accept Negro students?

2. Invite a Negro physician and nurse to tell you of their experiences in getting professional education and to enlarge upon or supplement the data you have secured under Project 1 above.

3. Organize an interracial club for students for the purpose of cultivating personal understanding and friendship, and to discover and carry out practical ways of helping talented young people handicapped by prejudice, misunderstanding, and poverty.

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## *Booker T. Washington*

*by*

FRANK GLENN LANKARD

IT IS HARD for many of us to realize that in the America which we fondly call "the land of the free and the home of the brave," black people, including little children, were once held in a state of slavery. Human slavery, at its best, is never a beautiful institution. Even in America, the slaves often lived in quarters that were poor and unsanitary. This condition does not come about because the masters are cruel, but it is a natural condition reflecting the status of those who live in the social order known as slavery. The Negro became a vital factor in the economic life of the South, but his status was affected, both socially and economically, by the fact that he was treated for the most part like a machine. Naturally, it was important to feed and clothe him, but in the main no more was invested in him than was profitable.

Slavery was always a problem in American life, forcing its way again and again into political campaigns and finally dividing a great nation into North and South. In 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and slaves who had prayed and sung about freedom were made free men.

One of the figures who made his way up from slavery and who became a creative figure in the life of his people was Booker T. Washington. Born in 1858 or 1859 (the date is uncertain) in Virginia, here was a slave among slaves whose life had its beginnings in the midst of miserable, desolate, unpromising surroundings.

Booker's mother was a slave cook, and he lived with her until he was fifteen years of age. His father is thought to have been a white man who lived on a neighboring plantation. It is doubtful if a white father would have taken notice of a black son, and in all probability

Booker never saw his father. The slave cook and her little son lived in a poor cabin that served the double purpose of sleeping quarters for them and kitchen for the "big house." Booker's childhood was spent in comparative poverty, with meager rations of food and clothing; but, in spite of this, he held no animosity against his owners.

Booker was old enough to have a vivid recollection of the "great day of freedom." All about him were the feverish activities of the slaves who were living for only one thing: freedom. He remembered how the "grapevine telegraph" buzzed with whisperings and the smallest bit of information that was overheard was rushed to all the slaves on the plantation. The slaves were in a state of feverish excitement, and mothers prayed that their children might be free. The Negroes were singing not only for freedom "in the sweet by and by," but for bodily freedom here and now. All the while, however, the more thoughtful slaves were torn between loyalty to their old masters and action that might lead to their freedom. Life is rarely simple, even among slaves.

As time went on, the whisperings of freedom became more frequent, the songs louder, and hope mounted to great heights. Then, one day, a message came saying that all the slaves should gather at the "great house." At last the great day of freedom had come. The "white folks" were sitting on the veranda. A man in uniform read the Emancipation Proclamation. The master arose and explained to the slaves what the paper meant: they were slaves no longer. For a time, surging emotions held sway; the Negroes laughed hysterically and wept for joy. Slaves but a moment before, already they began to realize that freedom brought with it cares and responsibilities that they were ill prepared to meet. Freedom, so wonderfully sweet when it had not existed, had now become a problem with its stern realities.

Booker's mother had married, and his stepfather found his way over the mountains to West Virginia. After the emancipation, he sent for his family. Packing their few belongings in a cart, they began the long, tedious journey. When they arrived at their destination, they found that the stepfather had secured a position in a salt factory and had built a cabin near by similar to those on the plantation.

There was no school in the colony, nor anyone who could so much as teach the alphabet. In spite of these illiterate surroundings, Booker longed for an education. His mother sympathized with his ambitions and secured for him a book on the alphabet. He studied diligently and learned most of the symbols. In the meantime, a rather well-educated Negro came to the village, and a school was organized in which he was invited to teach. With great eagerness, Booker anticipated the opportunity this afforded him. At the time, however, his stepfather was having difficulty in supporting the family and felt compelled to send his son to work instead. This was a great disappointment to the boy, but he refused to be discouraged and carried on his studies at home as best he could. When later a night school was opened, he attended that.

There came a day when, for a short time, Booker had an opportunity to attend day school. Here he became the proud possessor of two names. In answer to the roll call, all the other children gave at least two and sometimes three or more names. Incidentally, the new freedom had brought with it the necessity of choosing a surname. Formerly, Negroes had had only one name, such as Sam or Booker. After their emancipation, they took a second name as part of their lawful "entitles." So Booker now adopted the name Washington, which he kept for himself and his family ever after. Later, his mother told him that when he was a baby she had given him the name Taliaferro, and Booker used this as his middle name.

One day a stranger came to the village with stories of a big school that had been founded for the people of his race. It seemed to young Booker T. Washington that this must be the most wonderful place on earth, and he determined to go there as quickly as possible. At fourteen, Booker decided that the time had come to go, but he did not know where the school was nor even its name. He made inquiries and learned that the stranger had been referring to Hampton Institute, and that it was somewhere in Virginia. Gathering a few pieces of clothing into a bag, he purchased a railroad ticket in the direction of Richmond as far as his meager funds would take him. The rest of the journey was completed on foot and through the kindly "lifts" of fellow travelers. Arriving in Richmond with no money, Booker slept the first night under a sidewalk and the next

day secured a job loading a boat. This gave him food and a half-dollar with which to go to Hampton.

When the lad arrived at Hampton, hungry and dirty, he presented a picture of so little promise that the headmaster did not consider him a fit candidate for the school. To test his worthiness, he was assigned the task of cleaning a room. Thanks to the training of a very particular mistress whom he had once served, he cleaned the room thoroughly and made it look very tidy. This was, in reality, his entrance examination, and he passed it successfully. He was admitted to the institution and given a job as a janitor to help defray his expenses.

At Hampton, Booker came in touch with General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, its founder, whom he regarded as the most intelligent, cultured, and accomplished man he had ever met. He felt that to be with General Armstrong was in itself a liberal education. It was here, too, that Washington learned to use the Bible and discovered its beauty. He came to prize it not only for its religious help but for its great literature.

Washington soon developed an ability for oratory. He was a member of the debating team and was instrumental in founding a "Speech Society." Although not interested in oratory for its own sake, he was fired with a desire to better the world and found his oratorical ability a great asset. He won a place as one of the speakers at the commencement exercises and was graduated from Hampton with honors.

Graduation over, Washington found work in a hotel. He was more interested in bringing light to his people than in running hotels, however, so that when the hotel closed he returned to his home town, where he was elected schoolteacher. The Negroes desperately needed education. Illiterate and largely irresponsible, they were living far beyond their means. There were "quack" teachers everywhere, which only added to the confusion. Washington burned with a desire to help his race really emancipate itself from slavery, and he looked upon the right kind of education as the best means to that end.

At nineteen, Washington stopped teaching for a while in order to pursue his own education further. He went to the city of Washing-

ton, where his studies were more academic than industrial, as they had been at Hampton. He constantly studied the life of his people and sought for the best ways to serve them.

Since Washington had been an honor student at Hampton, had proved his ability as a teacher following graduation, and had procured further education in Washington, he was invited by his old friend, General Armstrong, to return to Hampton Institute to act as tutor and caretaker of a group of Indians. This incident only brings to light again one of the chief characteristics of his life, namely the desire to serve. He had a consuming desire to help and to lift up all humanity, regardless of color, race, or creed. A year later, in order to help some poor unfortunates who could not afford the regular course at Hampton, we find him teaching in a night school.

Booker T. Washington was to make his greatest contribution to his race at Tuskegee. Here he found a task big enough to challenge the most forceful will, and the undertaking gave him opportunity to exert a great influence through the unusual qualities of his nature.

He went to Tuskegee to organize and supervise an institution similar to the one at Hampton, Virginia. It was a Herculean task. For eighteen years, Washington worked at an undertaking that seemed to be harder than making bricks without straw. The work began in a shed, a log kitchen, and a hen house. His task was to teach proud but ignorant and poverty-stricken Negroes self-reliance, the dignity of labor, and the common morals of the Christian life. This is no easy task in any age among any people.

Booker Washington had the help of a loving wife, also a teacher; and together they begged and borrowed the money from people who believed in their cause, so that at least a modest start might be made in the building of the school. The students, following the example of Washington, plowed the land and made and laid the bricks of the school in which they were to be taught. It was a most discouraging task at times. There was no money, no endowment, and no buildings except those that the students built. They had so little to work with that it was hard for them to reach the level of enthusiasm and hope on which Washington and his wife lived. One incident is typical: A girl student went to the well for a drink of water and found that the rope was broken. Irritated already by the disadvan-

tages of the school, her exasperation became audible, and Washington heard her say: "You can't even get a drink of water at this school!" It hurt him, of course, and lesser men would have fallen beneath the load of difficulties and criticisms. Washington, however, was made of sterner stuff, and he found the courage to see it through. A forceful will and a mighty determination were outstanding characteristics of his life, and he accomplished whatever he set out to do regardless of the cost in time and effort or the difficulties involved.

It was Washington's idea that every student in Tuskegee should learn a trade. Many parents and not a few students were out of harmony with this ideal, but no financial loss incurred by parents' withdrawing their children or by others who refused to come could sway him from the path that he believed to be right. He determined that the young Negroes of the South should become economically independent, and he believed that the path lay through the industrial arts. Time, we believe, has vindicated his judgment. Washington was not opposed to culture; in fact, he wanted the students of his school to receive all the culture they could, but the core of the curriculum was the practical arts.

The efforts of Booker T. Washington were at last crowned with honor and success. After eighteen years of indefatigable labor, he was offered a trip to Europe. A vacation had never occurred to him. At first he refused, more by instinct than anything else, but finally he yielded to the invitation. Honors began to crowd upon him. Harvard University conferred upon him an honorary Master of Arts degree. When he received it, the incident was so striking that a correspondent of a New York newspaper made this comment:

When the name of Booker T. Washington was called, and he arose to acknowledge and accept, there was such an outburst of applause as greeted no other name except that of the popular soldier-patriot, General Miles. The applause was not studied and stiff, sympathetic and condoling; it was enthusiasm and admiration.<sup>1</sup>

Washington never courted fame, but his work at Tuskegee was so outstanding in the education of the Negro that it could not pass

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<sup>1</sup> *Up from Slavery*, by Booker T. Washington (New York, Doubleday Doran and Company, 1901), p. 300.

unnoticed. Famous men visited Tuskegee, President McKinley among them. He was greatly impressed by what he saw and warmly congratulated Washington on the ideal that was uppermost in the Normal and Industrial Institution. He praised the good work that it was doing in educating students to live lives of honor and usefulness and also pointed out that the Institute not only enjoyed a reputation at home, but was becoming known abroad.

The thought has been expressed that an institution is but the lengthened shadow of a personality. This is true of Tuskegee, and it will ever remain as Booker T. Washington's greatest monument. He sensed the supreme need of his race and set out to answer it in a practical way. By sheer determination, indomitable courage, and profound faith in the future, he built up one of the greatest institutions in the South that was engaged in the uplift of the colored race.

There were, however, other things of permanent significance in Washington's life. In the first place, he was a great humanitarian who worked for a better understanding and a fuller appreciation between white men and black. There is something permanent about a spirit of tolerance and a sincere desire for better understanding. A notable example of this spirit was Washington's address at the Atlantic Exposition in Alabama, in 1895. A commentator remarked: "That man's speech is the beginning of a moral revolution in America." And indeed it was. Here, for the first time, was a black man speaking before a white audience, pleading for his race. When he had finished, the audience stood, whistled, and cheered its approval of his true and powerful words. The governor of the state walked across the platform and grasped the black man's hand, while the crowd shouted its approval. Here was the spectacle of two races that for years had existed in distinct classes joined in the spirit of a better understanding, brought about by the human, Christian ideals of one of the greatest American Negroes who has ever lived.

Not only did Washington help the Negro appreciate the dignity of labor, but he helped his race to have a true pride in itself and a real belief in the things that abide. For, in addition to being a great humanitarian, Washington was also a true Christian. He developed a love for the Scriptures at Hampton Institute, and it became the habit of his life to read the Bible every day. He was a Christian of a



practical sort. He believed in the Christian idea of abolishing class and race discrimination, and he took active and effective steps to create good will and better understanding. He held to the Christian idea of the dignity of labor, and was sustained again and again in his difficult undertakings by an unswerving faith in the God of justice, righteousness and truth.

Booker T. Washington's accomplishments can be divided, in the main, into two spheres of labor: the education of the Negro, and the reconciliation of the colored race and the white race. His lifework was, in reality, the unfolding of these two ideals. He achieved splendidly in the former, and he flung the torch to the hands of others who must arise and continue the battle until the second ideal becomes an accomplished fact.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Do Negroes live exactly as the white people in your community?
2. Is there any justification in free and democratic America for racial discrimination?
3. Do you associate with Negroes in the way that you do with others?
4. How could you study the economic accomplishments, the social conditions, and the art, literature, and poetry of the Negroes in America?
5. How should you go about study and action with regard to promoting racial good will?

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## Roland Hayes

by

FRANK GLENN LANKARD

ROLAND HAYES is acclaimed the foremost singer of the colored race in the *Negro Yearbook* for 1931-1932, but nowhere have we been able to find a more discriminating interpretation of him and his art than that which appeared in the *Nation*, for December 19, 1923, by Henrietta Straus:

Roland Hayes imprints upon his work so much of what we call his soul that to do full justice to the one we must understand the other. To write only of his singing would not be enough, although that alone would place him in the front rank of concert artists regardless of race or nationality. I should certainly call him our finest American *Lieder* singer, for the "Spirituals," in which he is supreme, are only a part of his art after all. With unusually fine musical sensibilities he has an ear for languages so acute that whether it is Purcell in English, Handel in Italian, Bach in German, or Fauré or Massenet in French, he sings with impeccable taste and diction, never once straying from the picture in the frame.

But these attributes form after all only the husk of his art. Its substance is something quite otherwise, an inward element that bears the stamp of an experience more spiritual even than artistic. It brings to his art what my old singing teacher used to call "the most wonderful quality in the world"; namely tenderness; because where passion can tear a singer to pieces and leave the auditors cold, against tenderness there is no defense. It is a quality that lends enchantment to the voice, yet it is not always included in the artistic temperament. . . . In Hayes it seems to spring from a deep and pure humanity, subjecting all that he sings to a sort of spiritual alchemy. And not all that he sings can stand the test. Pseudo-sacred music like Dvorak's setting to the magnificent text of his seventh Biblical song becomes unbearably cheap, like a commonplace church solo. Even the "Dieu" of César Franck's "Procession" seems

a bit futile, the mysticism vanishing into thin air. Yet such an atmospheric fragment as Fauré's "Claire de Lune," stripped of all sensuous nuance, will gleam suddenly like the ray of pale moonlight it was meant to be. And the "Spirituals" like no other songs in form and content, will shine as pure gold, bearing a strange kinship to old masters like Bach, as though they were merely repeating a familiar message in new words. Here is an interpretation of music that is independent of schools, and to understand it fully one must go to the man himself.

Roland Hayes was born and reared in the South. His birthplace was Curryville, Georgia, about fifty miles from Chattanooga. His parents were ex-slaves who lived in a simple cabin. When Roland was quite a small boy, his father met with a painful accident that made it practically impossible for him to work. Roland's mother was uneducated but ambitious. After her husband's accident, she went into the fields and worked with plough or hoe, returning to the house to cook, sew, and wash. The father died when Roland was twelve years of age.

Although theirs was a humble home, Roland was nurtured in the musical heritage of his race and in the religious faith of a mother who had become conscious of the sustaining qualities of that faith during her early years of bondage. Realizing their poverty, yet always ambitious for her children and painfully aware of the lack of educational opportunities in their own community, she moved with her children to Chattanooga, where Roland found work in a factory making paper weights. He spent his evenings studying with a colored teacher, thus adding a little to his small store of knowledge. Though only a lad of fifteen, it was his job to unload pig iron, work with rough scrap iron, and handle heavy ladles filled with molten ore. It was not uncommon for flakes of the hot metal to fall and burn his feet. The compensation for this hard and dangerous work was eighty cents a day. But it was a job and a chance, and during most of this period he was also singing in a church choir.

When he was seventeen, it was Roland's good fortune to meet Arthur Calhoun, a former Negro student of Oberlin who was teaching in Chattanooga. One night Calhoun took young Hayes to the home of a white man in Chattanooga, where, for the first time in his life, the lad heard music by such masters as Caruso, Sembrich, and

Emma Eames. That evening was a great spiritual experience for Roland. A new world opened before him, and he describes it in these words:

That night I was born again. It was as if a bell had been struck, that rang in my heart. And, it has never ceased to ring there! I had not known what my friend meant when he talked of music. I had not been capable of imagining it. The revelation was so overwhelming that I was like one who had been blind and suddenly is given light.<sup>1</sup>

Soon Roland made his way to Fisk University, where for four years he pursued his studies and developed his voice, supporting himself all the while by working in a private home.

We next find the young man in Louisville, Kentucky, where once more the door of opportunity opened for him. He worked as a waiter at the Pendennis Club and was often called upon to sing for the entertainment of the guests. On one occasion, Henry H. Putnam from Boston, hearing the young man sing, was instantly attracted by the quality of his voice and mentioned his interest in Hayes to a member of the club. Strangely enough, later on when Hayes was thinking of going to Boston to study, he mentioned his plan to the very man to whom Mr. Putnam had spoken. This gentleman immediately communicated with Putnam whose interest in the young singer was still alive. Hayes never attributed this coincidence to chance; to him, it was a part of the kind Providence that has always guided him. Mr. Putnam persuaded four of the leading vocal teachers of Boston to hear the young Negro sing, with the result that Hayes finally became a pupil of the illustrious maestro, Arthur Hubbard. In addition to his studies, he continued to support himself and his mother, whom he had persuaded to join him.

Desperate for money with which to continue his training, and with his soul aflame with song, Hayes conducted his own concert tours in the United States between 1916 and 1920. R. Nathaniel Dett, writing in the *Southern Workman* in February, 1924, describes the singer's visit to Hampton Institute:

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<sup>1</sup> *The Negro in Literature and Art*, by Benjamin Brawley (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934), p. 178.

Nearly ten years ago, being then almost unknown and unheralded, he sang, rather informally, at one of the Christmas exercises of Hampton Institute in the old Cleveland Hall Chapel. His appearance at that time was a complete surprise to the audience, as no announcement had been made of any "extra attraction" other than the usual exercises by the Music Department. Shortly before the conclusion of the program the director of music announced that he had a "Christmas present" for the audience and seated himself at the piano. There were smiles of amused anticipation which increased rather than diminished as Hayes, dark and diminutive, rose from a most inconspicuous place among the choir boys and went forward to sing. The opening chords of Dudley Buck's "Fear Not, O Israel" commanded a kind of silence, but when the first words, "Behold, there shall come a day" suddenly rang out, strong, clear, and sweet, in tones which have baffled the best critics of Europe and America to describe, the marked change of attitude on the part of the listeners was as noticeable as it was swift. As the song progressed the audience literally hung on each tone of the singer, and when fell the final words "I have redeemed thee; I have redeemed thee," the whispered tenderness of it all was like a benediction. There was a hushed moment, full of amazement and delight, before a thunder of applause followed. The next piece, Johnson's "Since You Went Away" was greeted with an even greater demonstration, but if there was any hasty conclusion that this was due to the Negro element in the song, the idea was immediately dispelled by the ovation which awarded the high delicacy of Jenson's "Morning Zephyr."

The first great event in Hayes' musical career took place in Boston. In 1918, against the advice of most experienced people, he engaged Boston Symphony Hall for a concert and became personally responsible for the initial expense of a thousand dollars. It was necessary for him to sell enough tickets in advance to meet the obligation, which he did almost single-handed, and in the concert itself he scored a real triumph. Furthermore, he cleared two thousand dollars from the venture. This evidence of her son's mounting success brought keen delight and satisfaction to his aged mother.

This outstanding success at Boston Symphony Hall completed his period of training in America, and Roland Hayes now decided to go to Europe to carry on his voice study, to learn several foreign languages, and to come to have a better understanding and appreciation

of the people of Europe. It had always been his theory that if he could understand the people, he could better interpret their music.

The young Negro singer was not instantly popular in England. Slowly, however, as he sang at Queen's Hall with the orchestra conducted by Sir Henry J. Wood, his reputation grew; and soon his chance came, as it has always seemed to come. On May 31, 1920, he gave his first recital in London and was enthusiastically received. Success came crowding in upon him. Indeed, Hayes now became so popular in England that he gave a "command performance" before King George V and Queen Mary in April, 1921, at Buckingham Palace.

Four years later, Hayes sang before the Queen-mother of Spain, Maria Christiana, at the Royal Palace in Madrid. He also enjoyed a popular reception in Paris, where he sang with the Orchestra Colonne, with M. Gabriel Pierne conducting. Similar receptions were accorded him in Vienna, Berlin, and all of the important musical centers of Europe. After singing in Moscow the *Pravda* recorded:

The thoughtful and sweet Schubert or the mighty Brahms, the indisputably good Italian arias, the sad humor of the Negro hymns, he gives them all in such a way that every moment one forgets about the artist as interpreter who comes between the audience and the song.

Roland Hayes returned to America after his great success abroad and sang in all of the principal cities. His concert tour of 1923-1924 was perhaps the musical sensation of the season. Again and again, he delighted capacity audiences in Carnegie Hall in New York and sang with the Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, and New York Symphony orchestras.

Through the editor of the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, the citizens of Louisville, Kentucky, extended to Hayes an invitation to return and sing for them. This spontaneous request on the part of the citizens of the city where he had worked so long as a waiter touched him more deeply than the opportunity to sing before the crowned heads of Europe. To Hayes, this was more than a personal triumph; he saw in it a vision for his race.

In April, 1925, Roland Hayes was presented with the Spingarn Medal. This honor is awarded by the Spingarn Foundation to the

Negro who is considered in any given year to have made the greatest contribution to his race.

More than a decade ago, Roland Hayes bought the old farm in Georgia where his mother was born. He called it Angel Mo' Farm, in honor of his mother, whom he called Angel Mo'. As Hayes grows older, there is an increasing desire to live more closely to the soil. From Angel Mo' Farm he goes forth to sing or travel without pretension, returning again to a wholesome family life.

With the outbreak of World War II, Hayes began timbering off Horn's Mountain (part of his estate) to make defense lumber for the Allied Nations. He expects to have a gristmill for the convenience of his neighbors, so that they may come and grind their corn. And after the war, he plans to construct a sorghum mill, for already he is putting some of his acres into sorghum cane.

Roland Hayes looks forward to the time when he can rid his farm of tractors and employ more men with mules. Hayes believes that we treat the earth more tenderly when we are closer to it, and keep the taste of metal out of our mouths and the smell of gasoline out of our valleys. He is convinced that we are more truly at home with our feet in the furrow.

As an interpreter of song, Roland Hayes feels a deep sense of mission. He must interpret the Negro and his music, and through his music interpret the Negro to the world. He regards it as a personal obligation to render faithfully the spirit and melody of the spirituals, which are the unique contribution of his people to the musical art of the world. Hayes regards the spirituals as the peculiar possession of the Negro; they are the stepping stones, as it were, to greater service on the part of the Negro to humanity.

It is this faithful devotion to what Hayes considers to be a divinely appointed task that helps him render the Negro spirituals in a way that captivates the hearts of his listeners and "carries them away" to Christ. It caused Heywood Brown, writing in the Boston *Globe*, to describe the effect in this way:

Roland Hayes sang of Jesus, and it seemed to me that this was what religion ought to be. It was a mood instead of a creed, an emotion rather than a doctrine. There was nothing to define and nothing to argue about.

Each person took what he liked and felt whatever he had to feel and so there was no heresy. And, as for miracles, music itself is a miracle.

For that matter, I saw a miracle in the Town Hall. Half of the people who heard Hayes were black and half white, and while the mood of the song held they were all the same. They shared together the close silence. One emotion wrapped them. And at the end it was a single sob.

"He never said a mumbling word," sang Hayes, and we knew that he spoke of Christ, whose Voice was clear enough to cross all the seas of water and blood.

Through all his success, Roland Hayes has remained a modest, unassuming, earnest, devout Christian. His ambition has been to serve humanity through his music, rather than to achieve honor and glory for himself. He looks upon his rare talent as a sacred trust and considers his career an opportunity, not for personal gain, but for interpreting to the world the soul of the Negro race. Much of his earnings have been invested, not in stocks and bonds, but in training young Negro artists. He believes in a special providence that has been leading and protecting him, and opening doors of opportunity. Indeed, it can be truthfully said that his sense of mission has made Roland Hayes a great artist and a greater person.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Judging by the experiences of Roland Hayes, the question might be raised: "Why is it that it is easier for a Negro to win recognition in Europe than in America?"
2. Roland Hayes believes that he has a special mission to perform in life. How would you describe this mission?
3. What are the present opportunities before Negro youth in your community?
4. What can you do about social and economic opportunities for Negro youth?

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## *Paul Laurence Dunbar*

by

FRANK GLENN LANKARD

**P**AUL LAURENCE DUNBAR, according to Benjamin Brawley, is "incomparably the foremost exponent in verse of the life and character of the Negro people."<sup>1</sup> A friend has said of him:

We shall always have with us the memory of his gentle presence, his courteous manner, his soft, musical voice, and as we turn the pages of a correspondence . . . our eyes are dimmed as we read.<sup>2</sup>

The life of the man of whom these gracious words were spoken was lived within the brief span of thirty-three years. Into those years were packed experiences, trials, and accomplishments of several lifetimes. Economic stress played a harrowing part. Love, ambition, and understanding were at home within his fragile frame; and all too soon disease and strain wore down the body that held his delicate and sensitive spirit.

Paul Laurence Dunbar was born on June 27, 1872, in Dayton, Ohio, the only child of Joshua and Matilda Dunbar. The father insisted that the baby be christened "Paul" because he knew that Paul in the Bible was a great man. "Laurence" was the name of a family friend who lived in Dayton.

Paul's mother had been the slave of a cultured master in Lexington, Kentucky. As a child, she was interested in the stories and poems that the master of the plantation read to the children evenings, as they sat around the fireplace. She was much younger than Joshua.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Negro in Literature and Art*, by Benjamin Brawley (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934), p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Works of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, by Lida Keck Wiggins (Naperville, Ill., J. L. Nichols and Company, 1907), p. 98.

All her life she wanted to learn to read and write, especially poetry. She finally succeeded, after Paul's birth, in learning from the school-children a very elementary method of reading. Mrs. Dunbar was a woman of sympathy, devoted to her son's success. She lived to see him become famous and was by his bedside when he passed away. She was a woman of kindness and consideration, and deserved the great love that Paul held for her throughout his life.

When Joshua Dunbar died, Paul's mother, determined that he should have an education, took in washing to meet the expenses of the home and keep the boy in school. The lad loved his studies and proved to be a good student. He spent most of his time and energy in the field of literature, and was fond of grammar and spelling. He was a quiet, somewhat timid student, and his teachers deserve credit for taking the time to develop and encourage a lad who might otherwise never have forged to the front.

Paul became interested in poetry and at the tender age of seven wrote his first lines of verse. It was only a child's poem, expressing childish sentiment, but it foreshadowed his literary genius. At thirteen, he recited original verses at an Easter celebration in his Sunday school.

When he had finished grammar school, Paul went to the Steele High School in Dayton, Ohio. There his personality and scholastic ability made him very popular with the students. In his sophomore year, he was elected to the Philomathean Literary Society; and he also contributed articles to the high-school *Times*, the student newspaper. In his senior year, he became the president of the literary society and editor of the school paper. He wrote the class song that was sung at the commencement exercises when he was graduated, with honors, in 1891.

Paul was now a high-school graduate with no money and no backing. He had an ambition for law, but he must first find employment and help support his mother. Seeking clerical work, disappointment followed him everywhere. The Civil War was not far behind, and prejudice against the Negro was intense. The boy would hear of an opening, approach the prospective employer, and promptly be dismissed because of his color. In desperation, he finally accepted a position as elevator boy in the Callahan Building in Dayton, at four

dollars a week. But this unpromising beginning proved to be a blessing in disguise. The use to which he put this underpaid position helped to make Paul Laurence Dunbar a "worthy singer of the songs of God and nature." Lida Keck Wiggins describes the values gained from his work here in these words:

There were few flowers in his path and many cruel thorns. He gathered the roses, inhaled their fragrance, and immortalized their beauty in verse, and the thorns he bore bravely as a part of human life. Thus he learned early to be a philosopher, and in consequence a great poet. Every moment that could be snatched from his busy hours was utilized in improving his brilliant mind. His soul, attuned to the infinite music which is ever to be heard even among most unfavorable surroundings, detected a melody in the grating of the elevator cables and the thud of the car as it stopped for passengers. The people he served were of lively interest to the lad, and into very ordinary faces his artistic mind painted unguessed nobility and beauty.<sup>3</sup>

A remarkable opportunity came to Dunbar while he was employed at the Callahan Building. The Western Association of Writers met at Dayton, and through the influence of a former teacher he received an invitation to give the address of welcome. Young Dunbar secured permission to leave his elevator, appeared at the appointed time, gave the address, and returned to his work. His hearers were deeply impressed, and the next day three men came to interview him. The interview, interrupted every time someone wanted to go up or down in the elevator, was reported by newspapers in the United States and England, together with some of Dunbar's poems. James Whitcomb Riley, who was extremely popular at the time, wrote Dunbar a letter of encouragement.

It was in the year 1892 that Dunbar really began his career as a professional writer. A group of men agreed to back a publication of his poems. The poet compiled a volume of poems, but at the last minute his friends deserted him. The cost of publishing the volume was a hundred and twenty-five dollars. The young Negro could scarcely comprehend such a large sum of money, much less save it out of his small wages. Fortunately, however, the poems excited the

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

interest of the business manager of the establishment that was to have printed them, and he loaned Dunbar the necessary money. Thus his first book, *Oak and Ivy*, was published. Within a period of two weeks, enough copies had been sold to pay off the debt. Through the kindness of Judge Charles W. Dustin, Dunbar then became a page in the Dayton Courthouse and gave up the job as elevator boy.

When the World's Columbian Exposition was held in Chicago, in 1893, Dunbar made a connection with the Honorable Fred Douglass, a Negro in charge of the exhibit from Haiti. His compensation was only five dollars a week, but it gave him the opportunity to read some of his poems before thousands of people. Douglass was deeply impressed by his evident talents and regarded Dunbar as the most promising young colored man in America.

The exposition over, Dunbar began to think seriously of entering college. He applied for the loan that once had been proffered him, but it was not forthcoming. The Black Jenny Lind Concert Company had promised him an opportunity to read at its concerts, but at the last moment the organization collapsed. This was one of the most discouraging periods of his life. With winter coming on, and no savings and no job, he had to borrow money in order to live.

It was then that Dunbar met the man who was to be of greater assistance to him than anyone he ever knew: Dr. H. A. Tobey, superintendent of the State Hospital at Toledo, Ohio. Dr. Tobey had read *Oak and Ivy*, but had not realized the full significance of the poems until, on a visit to Dayton, he learned about Dunbar himself. Then returning home, he reread the book with much greater appreciation. He wrote to Dunbar for extra copies, which he circulated among his friends, telling them what he knew of the life of this colored poet. In 1895, he invited Dunbar to come to Toledo to read before the institution. The performance was most successful, and the invitation was repeated.

A certain Mr. Thatcher, from whom Dunbar had borrowed money for living expenses, now came to the aid of the young poet and made possible the publication of his second book of poetry, *Majors and Minors*, published in 1896. This volume contained some of the finest verse that Dunbar ever wrote. His thoughts were honest, pure, and fearless; and he expressed them without artificiality or veneer.

Through the influence of Dr. Tobey, Dunbar met the actors, James O'Neal and W. J. Dixon, who was O'Neal's leading man in *Monte Cristo*, then being played in Toledo. The latter expressed great interest in *Majors and Minors* and gave the poems high praise. He told Dr. Tobey that, in his opinion, no poet had written such verse since Poe.

One of Dunbar's most fortunate contacts was with James A. Herne, actor and author of *Shore Acres*, who sent William Dean Howells of *Harpers Weekly* a copy of *Majors and Minors*, with the result that, on June 27, 1896, Dunbar's twenty-fourth birthday, that paper published a full-page review of Dunbar's latest book. This was exceedingly opportune, for the magazine had a tremendous circulation because it carried the story of McKinley's nomination. Almost immediately Dunbar flashed into fame.

The printing of this review was a most fortunate circumstance for Dunbar. A timid and quiet character, he had found his attempts to sell his own books most discouraging. Now, with sudden popularity, he was called upon more frequently to recite, his books were in demand, and people all over America wrote him letters of encouragement and offered aid. Again Dr. Tobey invited him to Toledo, this time to read before the elite of the city, and once more he was very impressive.

A third book of poems, *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, was published in 1896. This is probably the best-known and the best work that has come from his pen. Through the help of William Dean Howells, Dunbar secured a manager and moved from Chicago to New York, to be in a better position to carry on his literary activities. He was still in demand for readings, and on one occasion read before the widow of Jefferson Davis.

In January, 1897, Dunbar had the opportunity to go to England with his manager's daughter. The venture in England ended in disappointment; his manager deserted him, and he was forced to cable to America for funds to return. Dunbar then wrote a book, *The Uncalled*, which set forth his views on entering the ministry. He sold the book and settled his debts.

Through Dr. Tobey, Dunbar now became acquainted with Robert

G. Ingersoll, who secured for him a position in the reading room of the Congressional Library in Washington. While holding this position, Dunbar wrote for magazines and was a frequent contributor to newspapers. He had several offers to teach, but remained with the Congressional Library for one year.

On March 6, 1898, Dunbar was married to Alice Moore, his childhood sweetheart. Her education was sufficient to make her a valuable aid to her husband in his literary efforts. But despite their common interests and long friendship, the marriage ended in failure.

Dunbar himself regarded his classical English poetry as his greatest contribution to literature, but there are those who feel that his distinctive contribution was made through his Negro dialect poems. Famous among his poems in classic English are such familiar ones as "Ships That Pass in the Night," "Life," "The Poet and His Song," and "Ere Sleep Comes Down to Soothe the Weary Eyes"; while those who are familiar with his poems in dialect will immediately think of "When de Co'n Pone's Hot," "When Malindy Sings," "A Corn Song," "Angelina," and "Candle-lightin' Time." The dialect poems combine humor and pathos, and manifest a delicate irony of which Dunbar was master.

Dunbar was likewise a master in the realm of the short story. His short stories alone would have made him famous. The best ones are: "The Walls of Jericho," "A Family Feud," "The Ordeal of Mr. Hope," "Aunt Temple's Triumph," and "Jimsella." Many of these stories exemplify a very real humor. They gave Dunbar an opportunity to picture some of the peculiar problems of the Negro and to set forth his own ideas on education and life.

Dunbar also wrote novels, although these are inferior to his other works. He was a lyric poet and not a novelist. In this connection, Lida Keck Wiggins makes the following observation:

As well try to compel the lark to ape the cackle of a chicken, as to guide Paul Dunbar's pen for long in the paths of prose. His work was very creditable, because whatever he did was done well, but to write thus was to plod.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

The poet's thirst for knowledge and his insatiable desire to create beauty proved too much for his fragile body. As early as 1898, when he was only twenty-six years old, Dunbar was forced to give up his position in the Congressional Library because of ill-health. Rest might have cured him or greatly prolonged his life, but Dunbar could not rest. He was always hurrying here and there to engagements, and it was his custom to write far into the night when, for health's sake, he should have been preserving his energy. He finally contracted tuberculosis, and spent the last years of his life under the watchful care of his faithful mother. The weak and weary poet continued to dictate poems and prose contributions until two months before his death, on February 9, 1906.

During his lifetime, Dunbar was very much interested in the education of his race. Realizing how difficult it was to compete with white men, he saw the need of education for the Negro. He did not believe, however, that this should be simply manual, but rather of the mind. He would first train the mind and then the hand.

As a person, Dunbar was quiet and unassuming, even timid, never pushing himself beyond the place where his genius and real worth would carry him. He faced hardship bravely. When, early in his career, his friends deserted him, Dunbar refused to be crushed; instead he kept on, and his failures became stepping stones to greater achievement. He went through life learning lessons from both life and nature, and was able to distil great thoughts from common things.

Dunbar loved people and was never unmindful of human kindness. He was careful to write letters of thanks to those who had helped him and was loyal to his many friends. His best-beloved companion was his mother, who helped him secure his education. He looked at all nationalities, all races, and all ages, and interpreted them without prejudice.

Because of his genius, his capacity for friendship, his loyal and sincere spirit, Paul Laurence Dunbar had a great many followers who sympathetically watched every move he made and took pride in his success. Dunbar's published works had great influence on both black and white, for he loved all and interpreted life with beauty and truth. It has been said that "by his genius Paul Laurence Dunbar



won the attention of the great, the wise, and the good.”<sup>5</sup> And at the funeral service, Dr. Tobey, Dunbar’s lifelong friend, professed: “I never loved a man so much.” What better memorial could any man have?

### Questions for Discussion

1. So many great men have had a good mother or father, or both. Do you believe the statement: “If you want to educate a child, begin, not with him but, with his grandparents”?

2. Paul Dunbar’s mother was very fond of poetry. Her son very early manifested a similar tendency. How would you explain the son’s interests?

3. If Dunbar had rested more and worked less strenuously, he could no doubt have prolonged his life. Do you think that a man has a “pace” in life that he must follow, lest he “break his stride” and become less effective?

4. Do you think that Negroes are zealously striving for learning? If so, why?

5. Poetry has in it a large measure of feeling, as well as intellectual perception. How have the poetic gifts of Negroes contributed to the people’s welfare?

### For Further Reading

Brawley, Benjamin G., *A Social History of the American Negro* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1921), \$4.00.

———, *The Negro in Literature and Art* (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934), \$2.00.

———, *Paul L. Dunbar—Poet of His People* (Chapel Hill, N. C., University of North Carolina Press, 1936), \$1.00.

Dunbar, Paul Laurence, *Folks from Dixie* (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1926), \$1.50.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Negro Genius*, by Benjamin Brawley (New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1940), p. 60.

# *James Weldon Johnson*

*by*

LUCILE DESJARDINS

LIFT EVERY voice and sing  
Till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the list'ning skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea;  
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
Facing the rising sun  
Of our new day begun,  
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we've trod,  
Bitter the chast'ning rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered;  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
Thou who hast brought us thus far on our way;  
Thou who hast by thy might,  
Led us into the light,  
Keep us forever in the path, we pray,

Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee,  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee,  
Shadowed beneath thy hand,  
May we forever stand,  
True to our God, true to our native land.<sup>1</sup>

This stirring "Negro National Anthem," by James Weldon Johnson, has echoed from many college campuses. It has inspired the hearts of Negro youth everywhere. Sung for the first time by a group of schoolboys at a Lincoln's Birthday celebration in Jacksonville, Florida, it caught the fancy of the boys, and they in turn passed the words and music on to others. Thus it has become a part of the heritage of Negro students in America, just as its author has become an outstanding contributor to the progress of his race, not only as a poet, but also as educator, diplomat, and reformer.

It was second nature for James Weldon Johnson and his brother, Rosamund, to sing. Their mother, Helen Louise Dillette Johnson, born with West Indian blood in her veins, was especially fond of music. After grammar-school days in Jacksonville were ended, James entered Atlanta University and soon became a member of the university quartette, touring the country and delighting everyone with his music. When later he and his brother formed a musical team in New York, they produced many popular songs that gained for them wide fame. Together, they collected and gave to the public many of the melodies of their race. More than any one else, the Johnson brothers are responsible for popularizing the Negro spirituals.

It was over no smooth and easy road that James Weldon Johnson and his brother Rosamund traveled to fame and public recognition. They faced all the handicaps that ambitious Negro youth meet who seek to enter any profession and climb to the top rank. One story that James Weldon delighted to tell his audiences was about a balky mule which, at sunset and still a goodly way from home, was turned about-face by its ingenious driver and thus "balked the five remaining miles home to supper." The story is illustrative of

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<sup>1</sup> James Weldon Johnson, "Negro National Anthem," set to music by his brother Rosamund Johnson. Used by permission of the publishers, Viking Press, New York.

the resourcefulness this young man showed in meeting all kinds of obstacles placed in his climb upward.

He was always faced with the prejudice against his race, which once caused him to say: "It's no disgrace to be black, but it's often very inconvenient."

One day, while teaching near Hampton, Georgia, he was walking home from the little shanty church where he had been teaching a class. To protect his head from the blazing sun, he was carrying an umbrella. Some white men working on the road noticed it and called out: "Hey, nigger, don't you know better'n to walk over a road what white men's working on—and with an umbrella up?"

Some years later, he walked into a bicycle shop where a group of white men were loafing. One of these called out to him: "What would you give to be a white man?" At this sally, the other loafers tittered. Johnson paused and then, slowly and carefully, replied:

Let me see. I don't know how much I would give. I'd have to think it over. But at any rate I am sure I wouldn't give anything to be the kind of white man you are. No, I am sure I wouldn't. I'd lose too much by the change.

And later he made this pledge to himself:

I will not allow one prejudiced person, or one million, to blight my life. I will not let prejudice or any of its attendant humiliations and injustices bear me down to spiritual defeat. My inner life is mine, and I shall defend it and maintain its integrity against all the powers of hell.<sup>2</sup>

It was a long, hard road on which young Johnson entered when he set for himself, as principal of the grammar school in his home town of Jacksonville, the goal of lifting educational standards for the Negro. But painstakingly, and with real ability and tact, he went to work. Finally came a year when a group of exceptionally bright and ambitious students were ready to be graduated from the eighth grade. Although their schooling was officially finished with the

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<sup>2</sup> *They Dared to Live*, by Robert Bartlett (New York, Association Press, 1937), p. 46.

eighth grade, Johnson urged some of the students to stay on and quietly went about providing high-school courses and teachers for them. In this way, he gradually built up the school to high-school level. Then, taking the matter up with the city superintendent of schools, he managed to secure recognition for the city's first Negro high school.

It was likewise a hard pull up a rough road when Johnson, while still retaining his position as school principal, set about to prepare himself for the bar. Although several of its members were inclined to be prejudiced against Negroes, the examining committee found James Weldon Johnson so undeniably well versed in state law that they could not reject him. Soon he was ready to build up a legal practice among his fellow citizens.

It was this experience of persistently climbing uphill roads that helped the young man to prepare for the still greater difficulties he was to face later in public life, in government service, and as an advocate for the rights of his people.

Before long, James Weldon followed his brother, Rosamund, away from their southern home town to New York City, where they wrote musical comedies and popular songs together. James soon established his reputation as an author. He then took some courses at Columbia University, which led to his becoming an editorial writer.

Through friends and political contacts, Johnson was offered the position of United States consul at Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, which he accepted. Those were exciting years spent as consul, both in Venezuela and in Nicaragua—years to test the mettle of any young man whose job it is to represent his country through three revolutions. James Weldon Johnson displayed outstanding tact and diplomacy in this public office.

After giving up the consulship, Johnson returned to New York City, resolved to make his way in the literary world. One of his undertakings was an English translation of the Spanish opera, *Goyescas*, for the Metropolitan Opera Company. It was not long before public recognition for his literary work began to come to him. In 1916 Johnson won third prize, two hundred dollars, in a competition opened by the *Public Ledger* of Philadelphia to editorial writers throughout the country. In 1917 his collection of poems, *Fifty Years*

*and Other Poems*, was published. And in 1925 he was awarded the Spingarn Medal for service as "diplomat, author, publicist." Now his career was well established, indeed, it looked as though he had arrived at the top.

Then came to James Weldon Johnson the greatest opportunity of his career. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People called upon him to lead them in their fight to win justice and political equality for the American Negro. First as field secretary and later as executive secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., Johnson waged a continuous war against lynching, segregation, peonage, and other national evils. He gave his time and energy toward improving the Negro's status in Federal and state courts. His efforts toward reform brought him into contact with many prominent educators, legislators, and reformers, as well as with thousands of the more progressive colored people of America. Wherever members of his race were being exploited, there Johnson's influence was felt in their defense. He became an astute and able defender of the civil rights of an important minority group in this country, in whom friend and foe alike found a "shrewd diplomat and a vigorous campaigner."

It was in connection with his work with the N.A.A.C.P. that Johnson was sent to Haiti in 1920 to investigate the conditions of his race under American occupation. He brought back to the United States such an illuminating account of the desperate plight of the Negroes there that it had its influence in improving conditions on that island.

After years of active service for the N.A.A.C.P., Johnson resigned from his office to become professor of creative literature at Fisk University, in Nashville, Tennessee. He died in an automobile accident at his summer home in Maine, in 1938.

Throughout his varied career, James Weldon Johnson typified the finest and best in our American life. He was an amazingly versatile person, distinguishing himself as teacher, poet, lawyer, social reformer, and diplomat. As poet, he voiced the joys and the sorrows, the hopes and the ambitions, of the American Negro in lyrical form. As teacher, he sought to inspire young writers to make their distinctive contribution to American literature. As lawyer and reformer, he strove to win justice for his oppressed people.

Although he knew from bitter and humiliating experience the "stony road" that all members of his race must tread, and although he had felt the "chastening rod" of racial prejudice, this truly great man could still, at the end of his long, eventful, and useful life, lift up his voice and sing of faith and hope and victory. We are proud to think of him as a true American—true to his native land and true to the ideal of democracy so precious in the world today.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Are you acquainted with any person who, because of inferiority feelings, has become unduly aggressive and is therefore disliked by many people? In what ways may a person overcome such inferiority feelings, caused either by physical, social, or racial handicaps?
2. Discuss James Weldon Johnson's pledge to himself on page 100. What are the inner or outer foes that might blight *your* life if you permitted them to do so?
3. Look up something regarding the organization and work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Toward what reforms is it directing its attention at present? What notable victories has it won? What still needs to be done? What is the actual situation in our country today with regard to such social and economic evils as lynching, peonage, sharecropping? What can be done to improve the economic status and the living conditions of Negroes in your community?
4. If possible, get some well-informed Negro leader to tell your group what some of the leaders of his race are doing to advance the cause of his people.

### Project

Build a worship service around some of the more familiar Negro spirituals, such as: "Deep River," "Steal Away to Jesus," "Ain't Going to Study War No More," and "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian in My Heart."

An interesting poem with which to introduce these spirituals is "O Black and Unknown Bards of Long Ago," by James Weldon Johnson (in *The Negro in Literature and Art*, by Benjamin Brawley, pages 1,279-1,280).

Other poems of James Weldon Johnson are found in the collections: *Fifty Years and Other Poems*, *God's Trombones*, *St. Peter Relates an*

*Incident*, and *Book of American Negro Poetry*. At least one of these may be secured from your public library.

### For Further Reading

- Bartlett, Robert, *They Dared to Live* (New York, Association Press, 1937), \$1.25.  
Bullock, Ralph W., *In Spite of Handicaps* (New York, Association Press, 1927), \$2.00.  
Ovington, Mary White, *Portraits in Color* (New York, Viking Press, 1927), \$2.00.



## Walter White

by  
ROY WILKINS

EXCEPT IN THE MINDS of some few Negroes who have an undefined yearning for "unity," the idea of one leader for all the Negroes of the United States is dead. There is not now, and is not likely to be, a Moses for this people. For a brief period the late Booker T. Washington filled the role, but he served an era; and even before he died, in 1915, it was evident that no one man would ever occupy such a position again.

For Negroes have been developing leaders in every field, in every section of the country. The problem of the race today is to unify its leaders on a basic program to which all segments can subscribe, and there is some evidence that slow progress is being made on this project.

So it would not be accurate to say that Walter White, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is *the* leader of American Negroes. It is certainly true that he is the leader in the struggle for citizenship rights for his people. In this field his organization is supreme, although not alone. It is also probably true that Walter White is the best-known Negro in America today, among both white and colored people; because his work, by its very nature, thrusts him repeatedly into the public eye.

In 1943, White rounded out a quarter-century of service to the N.A.A.C.P. and his colored fellow citizens—slightly more than half his life. It would not be entirely fair to say that his color got him his job, but it was an important item. For Walter White is a "white" Negro, fair-skinned, with wavy brown hair (now streaked with gray) and blue eyes. Personally he gives the matter little attention,

but anthropologists have estimated that he is one sixty-fourth Negro.

Walter White had been graduated from Atlanta University in his native state of Georgia and was working as cashier in a life-insurance company when the late James Weldon Johnson, then field secretary of the N.A.A.C.P., visited Atlanta and offered young White the post of assistant secretary. The work of the young association, then only nine years old, was expanding, and one of the needs was for a man who could investigate lynchings and other disorders while mingling freely with whites. White filled the qualifications admirably. He could "pass"; he had served as secretary of the Atlanta chapter; he was a Southerner, familiar with the ways of Southern white folk; and he was courageous, alert, and eager.

Thus began a long career in which the Atlanta youth personally investigated more than forty lynchings and ten race riots. He became a familiar and potent figure in the halls of the nation's capitol and a powerful voice for his people in books, magazines, and newspapers, as well as from the lecture platform and the radio microphone.

His first report on a lynching was published in *The Crisis*, official magazine of the N.A.A.C.P., in May, 1918, and told of the burning alive of Jim McIlherron, at Estill Springs, Tennessee. His latest riot report (at this writing) was published in *The New Republic*, for August 16, 1943, on the Harlem disorders of August 1 and 2.

In between these dates, White has led a campaign against lynching and mob violence that has revolutionized public sentiment in America. From an investigator of lynchings, he has progressed to the position of foremost propagandist and most skilful lobbyist in this country in behalf of Federal legislation against mobs.

His lobbying activities involve many a tale, many heartbreaking failures, and some scintillating successes; but the real thrillers in his life are found in the hazardous sorties into lynching territories, often before the Main Street crowds had ceased gathering in little knots to discuss the latest killing.

In a reminiscent mood, White will probably declare that the lynchings in Brooks and Lowndes Counties in Georgia, in May, 1918, and the triple lynching in Aiken, South Carolina, in 1926, were the most

horrible experiences in his career. The Georgia lynchings not only ranged over two counties but spanned a week, from May 17 to 24. Six persons were reported as having been killed by mobs, although unverified reports told of eleven victims. All were killed in revenge for the murder of a plantation owner, one Hampton Smith, whose reputation was such that he could not hire Negro workers but had to secure them by paying the fines of convicted persons. One of these Negroes worked out his fine and many more days beside, finally asking for his pay. He was beaten, and two nights later shot and killed Smith.

Mobs roamed the county, hanging and shooting five men and a woman, Mary Turner, in her eighth month of pregnancy, whose husband had been lynched. For remarking that she thought her husband's fate unjust, as he had not killed Smith, and that if she knew the names of the lynchers she would swear out warrants for their arrest, Mary Turner was hanged head down, the clothing burned from her body, her abdomen ripped open with a knife, and her baby slain.

White's official report on the lynchings, investigated by him only three months after he joined the staff of the N.A.A.C.P., read:

Members of the mob stated to the investigator that over seven hundred bullets were fired into the bodies of the two men. . . . The investigator learned from a man who admitted being in the mob . . . the names of fifteen other members of the mob.

The triple lynching of Bertha, Demon, and Clarence Lowman in Aiken, South Carolina, in October, 1926, rivaled the Georgia lynchings recounted above and riveted White to the fight against lynching for the rest of his days. After Bertha and Demon, sister and brother, and Clarence, a fourteen-year-old nephew, had had their conviction for murder questioned on appeal to a higher court, with Demon actually acquitted, the three were taken from jail by a mob of two thousand persons, driven out into the country, and told to run across a field while the mob members shot them down as hunters would animals.

If it might seem to people in this latter day of a decline in lynchings that Walter White persists too much on the theme, it must be

remembered that he knows more intimately than any man the horrors of the crime, having seen it almost at first hand.

While his experiences with race riots do not contain the bloody sadism of those concerned with lynchings, White himself has had many a narrow escape. In the Phillips County, Arkansas, riot of 1919, White completed his investigation and had just barely made his train to St. Louis and home. As he sank into his seat, the conductor asked for his ticket and said pleasantly:

You are leaving town too early. They are going to have some more fun. They are going to lynch a yellow nigger who has been spying on the boys.

White wiped his forehead of the beads of sweat, kept his hand and voice as steady as possible, and murmured something about business taking him away from "all the fun." He did not breathe easily until he left St. Louis for New York.

In the Tulsa race riot of 1921, White got into town in the midst of the rioting, registered at a downtown hotel, and was promptly, without any investigation whatsoever, sworn in as a deputy to help keep order. He was given rifle and badge, and assigned to a roving automobile containing three other men. Upon being handed his gun, White was told: "Now you can go out and shoot niggers." He says the three hours he was "on duty" were among the most tense in his life, but no Negroes appeared to be shot, so that his "loyalty" was not called into question.

As might be expected, his investigations convinced White and all other N.A.A.C.P. members that Federal action was necessary if lynchings were to be checked, for local authorities made not even a pretense at investigation. So it was natural that White, by the side of James Weldon Johnson, should have pushed for a Federal anti-lynching law. The first big effort with the Dyer Bill, in 1922, resulted in its passage in the House but death by filibuster in the Senate. This was to be the pattern of anti-lynching bills in the years that followed, both Republican and Democratic Senates killing such bills by filibuster.

In 1934, three years after he had been elected secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. to succeed Mr. Johnson, White made a spectacular effort

to secure the passage of the Costigan-Wagner Bill in the Senate. For the first time, the hearings of Senate committees were being broadcast over the radio; and it so happened that hearings on this bill were the first to be so broadcast. Shrewdly taking advantage of this innovation, White marshaled a score of witnesses for the bill, including white Southerners, topping off the effective testimony with a summation by himself, which, because of his ripe experiences, made raw human stuff for the radio audience. Thousands of letters were received from this broadcast, put on by the networks intermittently during the day, and although the bill was lost White and his fellow workers rightly concluded that inestimable gains had been made in the basic problems of educating and arousing public opinion.

Later White was to see the Gavigan Anti-lynching Bill twice pass a Democratic House but fail in the Senate. The Senate filibuster of January, 1938, however, lasted so long (twenty-one days) that, although the bill was lost, the gains in public education on the issue were incalculable.

It was in this fight that White was paid a bitter but high compliment by Senator James F. Byrnes of South Carolina. Pointing to White in the gallery of the Senate, Byrnes angrily shouted that if White would give the word, the bill would be dropped. White modestly commented later that he was only the symbol of millions of his people whose wishes Byrnes and others sought to ignore.

But it is not only in anti-lynching legislation that White has shown his astuteness and ability in the game of politics. Perhaps his greatest triumph in the Washington arena was his defeat in 1930 of the confirmation of Judge John J. Parker as member of the United States Supreme Court. Parker, from North Carolina, had been nominated by President Hoover. Purely as a routine matter, the N.A.A.C.P. checked back over his record to determine if any anti-Negro utterances and decisions had been rendered. It found a statement attributed to Parker, made in a political campaign, to the effect that the Negro had no place in politics and that the wise men of neither party wanted him there. White maintained that this speech disqualified Parker for the highest court, since he did not believe in Negroes exercising their political rights. In the beginning, the principal fight on Parker was by organized labor in the matter of so-called "yellow-

dog" contracts. But White would not be downed, and soon the race question far overshadowed the labor angle.

This fight was peculiarly a Walter White fight. At first his colleagues in the N.A.A.C.P. were loathe to launch the campaign. Hoover had spoken and would not back down; the Senate was Republican; Parker had a good record as judge. Confirmations of this sort are very hard to defeat.

But White, who is an indefatigable worker, busied himself at the killing pace he maintains in small and large enterprises. He dashed back and forth from New York to Washington. He sat in his office night after night, keeping three clerks jumping, long-distance wires humming, and telegraph boys scurrying. He roused Negroes from coast to coast. He sold his persistence to key Washington correspondents and to the entire Negro press. Within forty-eight hours the "heat" was on the Senators from the folks back home, and it stayed there until Parker was defeated by one vote.

Even though Parker has since proved to be an eminently fair jurist in Negro questions coming before his circuit of the Circuit Court of Appeals, the victory in 1930, like the indirect education on lynching, registered another tremendous gain for Negroes in their struggle for full civil rights. It gave them a sense of their political importance and served notice on politicians that Negro voters must be reckoned with on some basis other than that of the ward handouts prevalent prior to that time.

White has neglected no channel of information through which he can get over the story of his people and their struggles. He has traveled nearly a half-million miles in this country and abroad, lecturing and conferring on the problem. In 1921, he was a delegate to the Pan-African Congress in England, France, and Belgium. In England, he met English leaders, including H. G. Wells.

One of his novels, *Fire in the Flint*, on the subject of lynching, has been published in the United States, England, France, Germany, Russia, Denmark, Norway, and Japan. His other novel, *Flight*, was published here and in England. In 1927, he spent a year in France on a Guggenheim fellowship and produced *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, which was published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1929. His magazine articles have appeared in a score of leading pub-

lications in this country and England, including *Harper's*, *American Mercury*, *Nation*, *Bookman*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Forum*, *New Republic*, *English Journal*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, and *Saturday Evening Post*.

Not content with writing himself, White, as a member of the American Center of the PEN Club, has discussed his point of view with authors the world over. Behind the scenes, so to speak, he has influenced expressions on the Negro in helpful places out of reach of the straight propagandist. An astonishing number of manuscripts are sent to him each year for perusal, even before they are read by their publishers. He probably has more contacts among white people of influence in America than any other one Negro: top-flight authors, Wall Street bankers, college presidents, daily newspaper publishers, editors and feature writers, industrialists, labor leaders, film executives, key political figures, painters, sculptors, social workers, actors and actresses, and judges are among his acquaintances and friends.

Always White uses these contacts to further the work to which he has given his life. Nature has made it easier for him than for other Negroes, considering the American mores, to gain access to and maintain contact with white people. In these social contacts, he has laid aside his passion for his people and their cause only until the precise moment has arrived for its presentation in the most effective manner. Sometimes that moment is at the very outset; more often it is after social amenities have been observed. Over the years, his engagement pad reads like *Who's Who in America*. Some of the meetings are of a social nature, and some are all business; but, regardless of the original classification, sooner or later they all wind up in the interest of the cause of the Negro. White is tireless in his endeavors, a bundle of nervous energy that wears down his associates and is the despair of his secretaries. Every waking moment is devoted to pushing some plan—small, large, direct, or roundabout—that has as its objective a new gain on the racial front.

Of the many honors that have come to him, White perhaps is proudest of the Spingarn Medal, awarded him in 1937 for his personal investigation at that time of forty-one lynchings and eight race riots, and for his "remarkable tact, skill, and persuasiveness" in lobbying for a Federal anti-lynching bill. A close second to this award was

the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws conferred on him in June, 1943, by his alma mater, Atlanta University. Here in his home town on the campus he knew as a youth, near the football stadium where, small as he was, he cavorted as quarterback on the team, he heard his years away at the wars reviewed and evaluated. The Atlanta boy, son of a letter carrier and a mother typical of the good solidarity of the middle-class Negro family, had become a world citizen. No handshake of great men or plaudits of huge crowds under the sound of his speech-making affected him as did this tribute, awarded under the summer sky of Georgia.

In Walter White's nervous hands, in his restless brain, in his unceasing drive, in his quarter-century of persistence and devotion to a single cause, lie the chief reason for the difference in the Georgia of 1943 and the Georgia of 1918. Certainly the center jewel in this man's life must be the changes he has wrought, by his own labors and inspiration, in the life of his people and the thinking of his fellow white Americans on the rights of human beings to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

### Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think have been the most important contributions that have been made by Walter White?
2. Which issues dealt with in this chapter should have our further attention?
3. Why, in your opinion, does some lynching still take place in the United States?
4. What are the most important steps that could be taken in the realm of public affairs for the improvement of Negro-white relations?









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